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ABSTRACT

Written from a Metis' point of view, the book narrates Metis history (mid 1600's to present) and recalls the people's struggle for aboriginal rights and recognition of the Canadian confederation. Historical accounts include a brief description of the Metis; establishment of the Selkirk Settlement by the Hudson Bay Company; western movement and settlement of Canada; organization of the National Committee of the Metis of the Red River formed by Louis Riel; influences of Metis leaders (Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont); implementation of federal legislation (Manitoba Act and Indian Act); and formation of the National Indian Council and implications of "Red Power." Facts pertaining to aboriginal rights and land claims are explored in one chapter. A description of the development of a new kind of Metis in the 20th century and their fight to establish their place in Canadian society concludes the document. (ERB)

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WE ARE METIS



A Metis View Of the Development of A Native Canadian People

by

DUKE REDBIRD

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The Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association (OMNSIA) is an incorporated organization, headquartered in Toronto and represents approximately 185,000 Metis and Non-Status Indians throughout the Province.

The Aims and Objectives of OMNSIA are:—

- To carry out programmes that enhance the social, cultural, educational and economic lives of the Metis and non-status Indian people.
- To inform the general public of Ontario of the the aims and objectives of the Association and to secure the co-operation of the non-Native community in our struggle for identity and recognition in Canadian society.
- To assist our peoples in furthering the educational and employment opportunities throughout the country.
- To co-operate with all other Native organizations whose aims and objectives are similar to those of the Association.

"We are Metis" is the first complete published history of the Metis people written by a Metis, and is Mr. Redbird's first published book.

WE ARE METIS

A Metis View Of the Development of A Native Canadian People

by

DUKE REDBIRD



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INTRODUCTION

There is a unique native view of history that is absent from white historical writings about the Metis; white historians have had a racist bias that expresses itself in various forms. This book is an examination of Metis history that proves that the Metis are in a strong moral — and legal — position to demand their aboriginal rights and recognition of their major role as a founder of Canadian confederation. The modern-day Metis are developing a self-awareness and self-determination that promises the creation of a new Metis nation in Canada.

HISTORY OF THE METIS

The history of the Metis from the mid-1600's to the present is explored to develop a case against the traditional frontier explanation which states that the Metis people were doomed to extinction because they were a static, primitive society, unable to face the changes of an advancing, sophisticated, white civilization. Partly by reading between the lines of primary sources, and partly by stating events from a native view or perspective, it becomes obvious that the Metis were not only a strong and viable civilization, superior in many respects to that of the eastern whites, but that, in terms of political concepts and organization, they were decades ahead of their time. Their society was dispersed, not by the advance of a superior culture, but by the callous and legalistic exploitation of a people by a small band of fortune-hunting carpetbaggers.

THE MODERN METIS

The book concludes with a description of the development of a new kind of Metis in the 20th century, and their fight to establish their place in Canadian society. The strengths and weaknesses of their organizations and tactics are analyzed, and a program of consciousness raising among the Metis themselves is outlined, both as a method for uniting a people, and as a technique for establishing the recognition of the Metis as one of the founding peoples of modern Canada.

Duke Redbird

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The Genesis of the Metis

WHO ARE THE METIS?

It is assumed that the word Metis was used for some time, before Louis Riel, to describe people of mixed Indian and White descent. The word itself comes from the French, meaning "simply mixed"; or, Spanish, it was "Mestizo". However, the first use of the word in public print comes from the pen of Louis Riel himself, from an article that was published in the *Globe and Mail* not long after his death. People of mixed heritage had existed from at least the mid-sixteen hundreds or nine months from the time the first white man set foot in North America.

The Algonquin tribes, especially Ojibway, called them "wis-sakodewinmi" meaning burnt-sticks and later Frenchified into "Bois Brule" by the French colonists. The English called the Metis "half-breed" but this was generally a misnomer as there were few Metis who were actually of pure White and pure Indian ancestry in half and half portions. In some early official accounts and reports, the Metis were referred to as "natives" to distinguish them from Indians. The racial awareness of the Metis themselves is more significant than the French or English characteristics of their European forefathers. The definition is not restricted to the physical area of Red River, either, but is developed as a living process in today's society.

The Canadian government over the years has developed a wide range of terms to describe and categorize the native peoples' populations and their descendants. Most often these terms were arrived at arbitrarily and were used to restrict the native peoples. With the introduction of the Indian Act in 1867, an act of parliament "... which allowed a group of bureaucrats to administer the affairs of Indians and have full control over Indians", Indians were designated as "official Indians", that is, treaty Indians or registered Indians. These were the Indians who had a band number and were on the band lists in Ottawa. Treaty Indians were registered Indians who resided in areas where treaties were entered into with the government as opposed to those Indians who were registered in Ottawa but lived in areas where no treaty had been signed, i.e., the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

Another group-labelling involved the non-status and enfranchised Indians. Non-status Indians were those who had lost their registered status by marriage, i.e., where an Indian woman would marry a non-registered Indian, a Metis or a white man, or the off-spring of a marriage between two non-registered Indians. Conversely, a white woman who married a registered Indian man would become a full fledged Indian woman with all the rights and privileges under the Indian Act. An enfranchised Indian was a registered Indian who, under the Indian Act, had voluntarily decided to become a white man by relinquishing his registered status in return for his share of the principal of the band funds held in trust for him by the federal government, usually a few hundred dollars. Half-breed Indians were the children of western-European and Indian parents; they could be either registered as Indians or simply as half-breeds if their fathers were white and their mothers Indian. The irony is that white women, with no native blood whatsoever, could be registered Indians and Indian people could be declared white even though they had no white parentage. The distinction between non-status Indians and Metis has always been confused, even for native people. A very recent movement in native organizations indicates a strong desire to eliminate the term non-status altogether. It remains to be seen if this movement will evolve a more equal relationship between groups presently identified as Metis and those identified as non-status. In the past it seems to have been more a question of politics at any given point in time whether or not the Metis would accept non-status Indians as equal.

The first half-breeds in the West were eastern Metis who spearheaded the movement into the Red River country. This movement took place 100 years before the white man settled and 200 years before the first white women arrived. The original Metis, having very little contact with whites, took Indian wives and by the 1800's were able to intermarry among themselves and establish their own culture, exclusive of Indian or white.

For many years the Metis remained a distinct ethnic group identified specifically with western Canada. Although many Metis have, and do, live in the Northwestern United States, Metis have not been recognized even as an ethnic reality in American consciousness. In Canada, however, half-breed and many non-status Indians have moved toward the only recognized non-status group . . . the Metis. This has provided an identity solution for many natives who had lived for years in a limbo world outside the special status reserved for registered Indians. This represents an expanded concept of the Metis

people — with an historical continuity borrowed from the original Metis in the West, but based on the reality of native consciousness in North America.

The term Metis then becomes as much a concept as a concrete fact and will be used in a variety of ways. The application of the term will depend on its context to clarify its meaning. Basically, Metis can be considered to be people who identify themselves as such.

IN THE BEGINNING

In much of the early writing concerning the Metis, the people were treated simply as a colorful deviation and the human experience involved is all but lost. This oversight has filtered down to the present scholarship on the origins of the Metis. That the Metis existence is a result of human relationships and not political machinations is largely ignored by most writers. The birth of the Metis came about as a result of a "participation mystique", a desire of people wanting to get together. It had no intentional political function even though the result created political and cultural changes that played a major role in the history of Canada. Although all white historians on the subject agree with the latter idea, none have recognized the fact that the Metis today represent a new North American personality.

The best of both worlds was open to the first generation of half-breeds and they had an entrée into what little frontier white culture that existed as well as direct connection to the Indian culture through the mother's line. The early Metis were both bilingual and bi-cultural and for the most part, because of sufficient isolation, were not pressured to identify with either culture. There were ready-made roles for the men as interpreters, guides, canoe men, trappers and, for those so inclined and educated, clerks or traders at the outposts. The Metis women were sought by both white and Metis alike as extremely desirable and prized mates.

The most quoted assumption with the early Metis is that the conflict between the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company created the first sense of identity among the Metis. Although this assumption will be challenged more fully later on, it should be pointed out here that the Metis were being identified as a group as early as 1670. It is safe to assume that the Metis identified themselves as a distinct group sometime before that. In fact, identity formation could be expected shortly after the first marriage between two half-breed partners, about nine

months after. For the following generation that identity would be a social reality, especially in the larger communities. Such a community was a concrete reality at Pembina in 1780.

An important fact that is all too often over-looked by even the most eminent western-Canadian historians was the emergence of the "Bois Brule" in the West as a third readily recognized lifestyle. In the East, the half-breed tended to go "native" or pass for white. It was only in the West that the "Bois Brule" offered a third choice to the two cultures around him. This came about because the "Bois Brule", as master of his world with a far superior technology in relation to his environment, became a much envied and admired role model which developed into a third social alternative.

Official recognition of the Metis as a distinct people grew in direct proportion to the economic value of their holdings to outsiders. The first recognition came as a result of their role as cultural and economic go-between for the Northwestern and Hudson's Bay companies. Although they were not actually identified as anything but half-breeds or natives until Riel, still they definitely were seen as a race apart. Early description of the Metis varied with the personal bias of the writers and ranged from glorification to disrespect.

THE FRONTIER THESIS

In 1936, George Francis Gilman Stanley published his history of the Canadian west and became the one historian responsible, more than any other, for the popularity of the frontier thesis. The first assumption contained in this thesis is so logical from a European point of view that only a Metis or an Indian could begin to doubt it . . . but its rationality is precisely its weakness.

The thesis states that "both the Manitoba insurrection and the Saskatchewan rebellion were the manifestation in western Canada of the problem of the frontier, namely, the clash between primitive and civilized peoples" . . . In a slightly more chauvinistic vein he also states, "The rebellion of 1885 was the last effort of the primitive peoples in Canada to withstand the inexorable advance of white civilization" He reaches this conclusion having "studied both sides of the controversies, and endeavored to eliminate . . . all partisan or personal bias". What he eliminated in terms of bias he more than makes up for in unconscious racist attitude.

The Metis as pawn in a chess game where all the pieces are white is similar to the notion of the frontier thesis and functions

as an assumption underpinning the main theme of the frontier thesis. Quoting the Selkirk Transcript, Hudson's Bay Archives and other "unbiased sources", modern historians, including some Metis, assume that the Metis in the Red River were manipulated by the Northwest Company officials into opposing Selkirk's settlement. Even Metis writers lend credence to this distortion.

The second insidious assumption credits buffalo hunting techniques as the most significant factor in Metis life in general, and the Metis nationalism in particular. Even those few writers who discount the Metis as pawn, fall into this trap. All accounts of early Metis life contain some, often lengthy, descriptions of the buffalo hunt. The significance of the buffalo hunt in early Metis life diminishes somewhat when we find that not more than one-third of the Metis assembled for the fall hunt. This can only mean that two-thirds of the Metis were engaged in other activities. To say that the buffalo hunt was the main architect in building a sense of nationhood is absurd in the light of this understanding.

Another assumption, one that was particularly favoured by the Ontario Orangemen, was the papal conspiracy. This idea claimed that the Metis were organized and driven by the Roman Catholic Church to establish a Franco-Catholic empire in the new world. Although Riel did have a concept of a new world pope, this was 100 years after the "nation" concept was fully developed in Metis communities.

The argument against the frontier theory is quite simple and perhaps its very simplicity has served to be the major factor in its being overlooked by historians. The fact is that the Metis developed their sense of nationhood not because of white civilization or the Northwest Company or even Louis Riel. Rather, it was a natural expression of their own reality in the context of their own social development. Ironically, if read between the lines carefully enough, even those historians who have written supporting the frontier idea supply the necessary information to support the native perspective.

THE METIS CHALLENGE

There is a basic bias that exists in all experience and history is particularly vulnerable — because it is recorded to support the economic and social system it arises from. These same biases inevitably create radical prejudice. In the words of Carl Jung, the psychologist, the Metis "were a question mark addressed to

the world" and because they were prevented from communicating their answer, they have been dependent on the world's answer. It is important here to grasp the character of the western-European bias and how it functions. The white historians did not deliberately conspire to distort history. They were victims of their own cultural bias, which may best be explained as a way of orienting oneself to reality and also a way of excluding unwanted aspects of it.

To more fully understand this phenomenon of cultural bias one has to look at the European perception of history. Most white historians have assumed that possessiveness is a primary motivator, the territorial imperative, if you will. Land, to the white man, was to be possessed. Competition for personal gain was a life style and ego-self was the centre of all rationality. White reliance on the concept of dominance and conflict to gain status, limited only by law and then only if caught, gives rise to the notion that history is a series of social/political conflicts with winners and losers. Here we have a case where historians were only able to see reality in terms of "civilization" or, in other words, in their own limited perception of institutionalized history.

The Metis inherited from their Indian forebears a view of the universe that was opposite to that of the western-European of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. The white man saw himself as fulfilling his divine destiny by exercising his "will" upon the universe and changing the imperfections of nature into the perfect order of rational man. The Indian saw the universe as perfection personified and sought to simply change his individual imperfections to better fit the natural order. That the Metis were aware of both views, White and Indian, had the effect of uniting both concepts. This resulted in the Metis development of "response-ability". This ability to respond was an essential survival characteristic for a people who saw land as a living reality to be shared. This view was more natural in a world that was constantly changing. It was more in keeping with the natural functions of life than the white habit of attempting to control nature.

The Metis had developed a way of life that was co-operative, rather than competitive. Co-operation as a life style meant that the "self" had to be seen as a link in the network of life. This was quite different from the European idea of "self" as a link in a chain of logical events. The Metis gained status among his peers by his ability to compromise his conflicts within the group for the greater good of the community. In other words, dissolution of conflict — not dominance in conflict — was the goal. The Metis,

rather than being limited in their pursuit of freedom by institutionalized "law", were actually liberated through their natural sense of ecological awareness. This awareness served to influence the Metis view of history as an evolutionary process, a living process, one that saw reality in terms of relationship (inevitable or otherwise) and response to environment.

The basic characteristics of the Metis life style were so alien to the European ideas that the whites coming into the area of the Red River, like Hind and Dawson, literally did not see the civilization around them. This cultural "blindness", although not intentional, nevertheless was often unconsciously exploited in favour of the viewer. The history of the Metis as recorded by white historians is filled with these "blind spots" and has served to create what might be termed the invisible Metis or, as the Metis have called themselves, "The Forgotten People".

The Webster's definition of civilization is an ideal state of human culture characterized by complete absence of barbarism and non-rational behaviour, optimum utilization of physical, cultural, spiritual and human resources and perfect adjustment of the individual within that social framework. By that definition, the Metis had existed as a civilization more than a century before the first white settlement in the West. A basic idea of this book is that the Metis were indeed civilized and that that civilization was undermined, both consciously and otherwise, by Europeans and Canadians. This was justified under a local version of manifest destiny in pre-confederation days, which expressed itself in a desire for a "KINGDOM OF CANADA". This is the challenge to white-biased history, that there was a civilization of Metis people that has not been destroyed, but rather exists today, not only among the Metis but in the mind of every Canadian whose ancestors were in North America when Riel first said, "We are Metis". To outline the development of that phenomenon is the function of the next two chapters.

The Invisible Civilization

THE GENETIC BLUEPRINT

Most scholars in the past were content to think of Metis as only those offspring born of Indian-White marriage. However, in the light of modern research, it is safe to say that some intermarriage between other races and Indians occurred several thousand years before Columbus' voyage to the New World. Also, there is an oral tradition that the Celts made contact with North America around 800 B.C. as well as the persistent suspicions that the Nordic races made contact. Riel himself believed that North American Indians were descended from an early colony of Jews. In fact the Algonquin languages have been linked directly to Ogam (Celtic language of West Coast of Europe), the ancient tongue of the Druids. The debate among scholars now is whether the Druids got the language from the Algonquins or the Algonquins received it from the Celts. One thing seems certain and that is that there was a Metis gene pool in North America long before the discovery of the "New World".

In any case, the new Metis, that is, those who were descendant from the early French explorers and Indian women, were meeting in groups by the mid-1600's. From the very earliest writings historians referred to the Metis as: friendly, easy, honest, free, independent, active, enduring, hospitable; the fact that Metis children from earliest times were inculcated with such qualities indicates a degree of civilization that would be hard put to find today.

Even though the early writers recognized these traits in the Metis people, still there was an assumption by these same writers that without continuous contact with the "white race", the half-breed would revert to kind. The fact is that these "children of the forest" originated, for the most part, from the voyageurs who were already mixed blood and their so called reversion was simply realistic adaptation to their environment. During the first hundred years of the fur trade, only higher officials of the trading companies were actually white, along with the occasional explorer. By the year 1700, the largest number of children born were of partners of previously mixed blood. The "hybrid" was breeding true.

A NATURAL CIVILIZATION

The second and third generation Metis began to develop a natural civilization; from the native heritage they learned and developed a natural relationship with their environment. They lived as natural consumers in a benign environment that teemed with the necessities of life. Fur trapping, buffalo hunting, fishing, maple sugaring, wild rice and root harvesting provided all a man and his nomadic community could want. From their European heritage they developed the economic and technological skills of their frontier fathers. So these were the Metis of the early west — the guides, explorers, middlemen between the Whites and Indians; the Metis were the "elite", the "pride of the prairies".

Perhaps the most exciting development that took place, certainly the one which was to have the most impact in later years, was the political development that occurred among the Metis. This was not an institutional process but rather it was based on the most fundamental democratic principles of a free people. It was a process of decision-making which involved all of those that the decisions were to affect. This was consent of the governed who accepted "authority only if and when they were prepared to do so". The closest that this process came to the white institutional model was in the organization of the buffalo hunt. Perhaps this is the reason that so much has been written by white scholars regarding the buffalo hunt as it was the one area that closely resembled white institutions of the day, i.e., the military, Northwest Mounted Police, Hudson's Bay, etc. The fact is that the Metis utilized a task force process in the selection of their leaders. The individual best suited for a particular job was democratically selected to assume authority for a limited time period — usually until the task for which he was selected to lead was accomplished. The basis for this type of democracy was from the Indian form and not an imitation of white concepts.

The Metis developed a social style that was uniquely their own; a proud, fun-loving, brash people, freely borrowing from their French, Irish, English, Indian and Scots backgrounds to provide them with the cultural fabric of a new and colourful culture. These were the Metis who caught the imagination of many early writers, with their genius for creating unique patterns and solutions for solving day-to-day needs. The Metis developed a new language as well, using obsolete French and incorporating that with a unique prairie vocabulary. The adoption of the handwoven multi-coloured sash of the "coureur de bois", the fiddling and jigging of the French and Irish, mixed

with the haunting chants and songs of the Indian, produced the colourful style of the Metis that so enthralled writers even though their reports were often condescending. Much of the cultural activity of the early Metis took spontaneous forms necessitated by largely nomadic, but no less socially connected, groups of people.

The Metis, by the 1800's, had established a coherent and cohesive civilization that had a reciprocal relationship to the environment and a profitable arrangement with their White and Indian neighbours. They had built settlements and created a complex network of communication patterns sufficient for the successful interrelationship of their members. "They were an independent people, who asked no favours from either Indians or Europeans, but developed as men of dignity and earned respect."

Many historians who promoted the white view of history had obviously formed a false idea of the half-breed. They imagined them to be "a race little removed from barbarians in habit and appearance". But then there was a contradiction that these early writers were unable to resolve, that being that "in all respects they are like civilized men". This then was the basic flaw in white historical writing, the assumption that only individuals who read and write are representative of civilized man and that non-literate societies are, or were, "primitive". The historic fact of the Metis contradicts the white view. The Metis for 200 years had lived in a society vastly superior, in terms of realistic survival and social growth, to the so-called "advance of civilization". In the West, for those first 200 years, they were the only group who were capable of developing a reasonable alternative to Indian or white life styles. Prior to 1800, the white population was confined to a few Hudson's Bay and Northwest Company outposts. The Metis "never considered themselves as humble hangers-on to the white population".

The external influences on Metis life included the Indians, particularly the Sioux; the Hudson's Bay Company; their rivals, the Northwest Company; the Church that was established at Pembina, and the Americans. The claim of white historians that the Metis society was static and non-competitive in the survival sense of the word is denied by even the most superficial examination of Metis relationship and adaptation to the major external influences on their lives.

ADAPTATION TO CHANGE

The Selkirk Colony is a case in point. Through machinations

that would fit quite neatly into the boardroom of any modern day international corporation, Lord Selkirk, as a member of the Board of Directors of the Hudson's Bay Company, dealt himself 116,000 square miles of land to serve as a settlement for dispossessed Scots. The Hudson's Bay negotiated 10% of the deal as settlement land for retired employees. There is no record that other people in the area were ever consulted, despite the fact that much of the land in question had been occupied by Metis for several generations. Most historians agree that the Metis did not initially oppose the settlement. *The opposition came only when their own rights and their participation in the decision-making process was denied.* The Selkirk Settlement and the exclusion of the Metis from the decisions that would affect their lives became the model for all future conflict between Metis and the complex of governments and institutions that entered the area under the banner of "civilization".

If the Selkirk Settlement was to become the model of oppression then it may be said that Cuthbert Grant personified the response of the Metis to an outside threat. He organized a systematic defense of the area and effectively dealt with that outside threat. First, he rallied the Metis around the concept of a new nation — though Sealey and all other historians credit the Northwest Co. with the idea of "Metis Nationhood", the concept had been familiar to the Metis for 200 years. The tradition was part of the Metis heritage passed from their Indian forebears. The great confederacies of the Iroquois and Choctaw, the Sioux nation and others were models of nationhood long before the Northwest Co. tried to take credit and label Metis nationalism "as but a joke". The real issue, as far as the people who lived in the area were concerned, was the autocratic and arbitrary decision-making process that excluded the Metis. The new governor, Robert Semple, who was appointed in the fall of 1815, began making proclamations of all sorts and tried to introduce regulations that were unacceptable to the Metis — the control of the buffalo hunt, for instance, and the same of pemmican, both staples of the Metis livelihood. The resultant clashes between the settlers and the Metis were easily won by the Metis.

After the Battle of Seven Oaks, where Cuthbert Grant and a small band of Metis fought a force of Semple's men, killing Semple and 20 others, the Selkirk Settlers packed up their belongings and fled north. Cuthbert Grant was now in effective control of the whole of Rupert's Land. A treaty was signed with the Hudson's Bay Co., admitting that the Hudson's Bay Post was temporary and that "no appearance of a colony was to remain".

The Metis flag, displaying the symbol of infinity — a horizontal figure '8' — flew unchallenged for the time being.

The following year Lord Selkirk returned with a troop of mercenaries. Cuthbert Grant at first was prepared to stop Selkirk until he learned that Chief Peguis of the Saulteaux threatened to intercede with his warriors. Grant then decided to surrender to the authorities. He was charged with the murder of Governor Semple but was cleared in both the Upper and Lower Canada courts. He returned to the Red River to face a new challenge.

After the war of 1812 between the British and the Americans, the 49th parallel became the boundary line between the British North America and the United States. At best this was a meaningless boundary in the context and lifestyle of the Metis culture. However, a survey in 1823 determined that Pembina, the "capital" of Metis activity with its schools and church, was in fact in American territory. The Hudson's Bay insisted that the church and schools be moved to the Red River. Many of the Metis followed, particularly after Cuthbert Grant was given a tract of land for settlement and Grantown was established.

Two years prior to this the Hudson's Bay and the Northwest Co. had amalgamated, so in effect the Red River had become a "company town". This was particularly true after the Hudson's Bay had arranged to buy back the Selkirk territories in 1836. The land was then leased out on company terms. The collapse of the Northwest Co.'s trading posts meant that the Metis had to adjust considerably and in a short time. Their "response-ability" served them well, particularly with the growth of an American market that paid considerably more than the Bay.

It was the Metis who finally broke the Hudson's Bay monopoly over the fur trade. The company regulations said that furs taken in the territories of Rupert's Land must be traded to the Bay. However, in a territory as enormous as Rupert's Land and with so little of the frontier actually guarded, the Bay could not enforce their directives without the active support of the Metis themselves. As the demands from the company officials became more dictatorial, the Metis became less inclined to follow orders. When four Metis were charged and convicted of smuggling their own furs against company regulations — this was too much. The Metis once more were excluded from the decision-making process and their rights were not being recognized. The Metis, five hundred strong, surrounded the court house with their rifles. The judge involved decided to release the men and the incident symbolized the breaking of the Bay's monopoly on

trade and Louis Riel, Sr., was the recognized leader of the opposition.

All during this period the Metis had regular contact with the Indian tribes. With the Cree and Saulteaux there were long established social and family ties as well as a commercial trade link. With the Sioux, however, there was a running conflict in the early 1800's. Finally in 1844-45, the Metis signed a treaty with the Sioux and established a peaceful frontier which protected the settlements to the east. The Metis had established themselves as the wardens of the plains and prairie cavalry in every sense of the word.

If there was any factor which might indicate a lack of adaptability of the Metis to the forces around them, their relationship to the church is the only evident failing. "In our naivety, we regarded our priests as superior and invincible." The priests even took part in the buffalo hunt and by 1818 had built a church in Pembina which was later moved to the Red River in 1823. The Metis trusted the church to look out for their interests in relationship with the outside establishment. Although this habit of the Metis was occasionally fruitful, it eventually created a major weakness in the actions of the Metis between 1869 and 1885.

The quest for rights began as soon as the Metis recognized that forces were at work to undermine those rights. To the Metis the democratic process and the concept of the consent of the governed, as well as their reciprocal relationship to the land, were so natural that it was difficult for them to imagine any basis on which it could be questioned. Although they had superior numbers, military skill and obvious tenancy, they were willing to draft a series of questions to the legal governing body of the area. This was the Council of Assiniboia, appointed by the Hudson's Bay Co. The first document dealt most with rights of trapping and free trade of fur. It also showed a thorough understanding of the flimsy legal basis for land title and control of resources in the area. This startled the Hudson's Bay Co. and they immediately requested that martial law be declared. This was done and a regiment of troops occupied the area from 1846 to 1849. The Bay's reaction to the Metis initiatives certainly shows that they did not think they were dealing with a "primitive" people who had no understanding of their legal rights, as white historians have supposed.

The sum effect of all these changes, again contrary to the general attitude of Canadian historians, was a decline of Whites in the Red River area and a marked increase in the number of Metis between the years 1849 and 1856. Metis families increased

by 200 and white families dropped by almost 100. In 1857, the Metis represented 6,000 of a population of 7,000. The error that Stanley made in his writing now becomes evident. He admits that "the Red River Settlement was thus a simple, elementary, static democracy in which the inhabitants had pretty well come to terms with their economic, physical and political environment". But, he claims, only as long as they were in successful isolation. In the next chapter we will explore how the so-called static Metis met the onrush of Stanley's "superior" civilization.

TABLE 1

Chart of Population Changes in Red River Settlement*

NATION	1843	1849	1856	+/-
Halfbreeds	571*	684	816	+ 245
Scotland	110	129	116	+ 6
Canada**	152	161	92	- 60
England	22	46	40	+ 18
Ireland	5	27	13	+ 8
Switzerland	2	2	2	
Norway	0	1	1	+ 1

*Figures refer to number of families in area (Gladman 1858)

**Canadians in area are from Upper and Lower Canada, i.e., Ontario and Quebec.

TABLE 2

Chart of Population Ratio for Whites and Metis in Red River Settlements

YEAR	WHITES	FRENCH	ANGLO-
1857	1,000		6,000*
1871	1,600	5,720	4,080

*Combined French- and Anglo-Metis figures

NOTE: Howard lists 600 Indians for 1871 period.

The Great White Swindle

THE KINGDOM OF CANADA

In the mid-1800's the clamour for some kind of confederation was in full swing. The talk focused around a union of Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. One idea that was getting serious attention was the notion of a new British Monarchy, "The Kingdom of Canada", as the British were "rich in princes". Expansion beyond the borders of Upper Canada was also being considered. The Legislative Assembly sent an expedition west, headed by George Gladman, to "determine the best route for opening a facile communication to the Red River Settlements and ultimately to the great tracts of cultivatable land beyond them".

Meanwhile, American businessmen in the Northwest were actively promoting annexation of the whole territory by the United States. The Senate considered proposals to purchase the territory from the Hudson's Bay Co., "The intervening territories between St. Paul, Minnesota and Alaska", as they were called. American agents sent to the Red River to get the reaction of the people there, reported that the local residents "will never consent to be transferred by Parliamentary edict and without a popular vote to the distant and feeble Confederation of Canada".

The Metis were again caught in the middle. Instead of the Hudson's Bay Co. and the Northwest Co., the adversaries were now Canada and the Americans. History was repeating itself for the Metis.

Gladman, who had been sent to the west to "open a facile communication", sent back his report to Upper Canada. The Bay-appointed Council of Assiniboia could not "prevent the adventurers (I will not call them lawless and dishonest, for they are chiefly natives seeking to earn an honest living in their own land) from infringing upon the assumed rights of the Company over . . . that they are pleased to call Rupert's Land". Gladman realized that any effectiveness the government did have was due to the English and French Metis leaders appointed to the Council.

The Gladman report was not well received; it contradicted

what the government wanted to hear. "I am confident I speak the sentiments of the Red River people when I say their chief desires are: a voice in their own government and freedom to trade within the best markets within their reach." He also reported: "Whatever form of government may be decided upon, the preservation of peace and the maintenance of law and order will of course be its legitimate objects." Though Gladman headed the expedition, there were other members, among them a Mr. Dawson and a Professor Hind, who were filing their own reports — more to the government's liking. Hind wrote that the decline of the European population in the Red River Settlements "worked a change for the worse . . . the tendency of the native population to throw off the humanities of civilization and approach near to the savage wildness of Indian life". In April of 1858 Gladman was "dispensed with" and replaced by Professor Hind.

In 1860 another development took place in the Red River Settlement. A Dr. Christian Schultz had joined the Canadian minority in the settlement and took the stance of "the advance guard of a new economic and political order". He had been encouraged by Hind's report that the local halfbreeds "had no paper or document of any kind to show that they held possession of their land". Schultz purchased the local paper, the "Nor'wester", and began editorializing about how "the indolent and the careless, like the native tribes of the country, will fall back before the march of superior intelligence". Schultz and his cronies called themselves the Canadian Party, and flew their own flag from Schultz's store. The group began to purchase land from the Indians that the Metis had developed and which, by law, was owned by the Hudson's Bay Co. The fact that Dr. Schultz was an Orangeman and headed the local chapter of the Masonic Lodge gave him many useful connections back in Ontario.

THE SELLING OF A LIFE STYLE

The ink had hardly dried on the Articles of Confederation when in December of 1867 William McDougall, Minister of Works, introduced a series of motions to parliament "To promote the prosperity of the new Dominion and to strengthen the Empire; the time had come to extend Canada to the Pacific". He wrote that the transfer of the Northwest to Canada must not be delayed "by negotiations with third parties". Sir John A. MacDonald was more direct; "Should these miserable half-breeds not disband, they must be put down".

The following year, 1868, saw an absence of buffalo as well as a crop loss, which gave McDougall the needed impetus to advance the Canadian settlement of the West. As Minister of Works, he instituted 'relief' work on the Dawson Road. This construction was opposed to Hudson's Bay Co., nevertheless surveyors were sent in and local labour hired. The workers were paid by coupons that were redeemable at Schultz's store. As might be suspected in a situation like this, the men were paid less than the contract called for and the prices in the store were much higher than other communities. Schultz cashed in both ways; with his paper publishing activities of the "social elite" he felt strong enough to defy the Hudson's Bay. He was soon broadcasting that he expected governing powers when the Canadians took over.

In March of 1869, serious negotiations began for the sale of Rupert's Land to Canada. Not one Metis was represented in these negotiations, nor anyone in the area of the Hudson's Bay Co. McDougall expected that transfer of the territory would be formally completed by November. He immediately dispatched surveyors with orders to use the American system of survey, with 800 acre sections, stating, "The first immigrants and the most desirable, will probably go from Canada and it will therefore be advisable to offer them lots of a size to which they have become accustomed". Howard concludes that "the new Northwest, ostensibly to be a Territory of the Dominion, really was to be an extension of Anglo-Saxon Ontario".

The Metis had always used the French pattern of survey, with narrow river frontage and a depth of several miles. Even historians who emphasize the reluctance of the Metis to farm, admit that the ones that did exist, surveyed in the French manner, contributed to the self-sufficiency of the local people. When it became evident that the government surveyors of McDougall were actually cutting across existing farms, the patience of the Metis came to an end.

FROM SELF-IDENTIFICATION TO SELF DETERMINATION

"You go no further." These words, uttered by a young Metis with his foot on the surveyors chain, warned anyone who would listen that a time of crisis had come. The surveyor was working on the "hay-privilege" section of a Metis farm when the encounter occurred. Though almost all history books record the event, few point out that the Metis who stopped the survey was Louis Riel.

"We are Metis." So said Louis Riel and he defined what he meant when he wrote, "History of the Half-Breeds". "This is how the Metis think of the matter in their own hearts. It is true that our Indian origin is a humble one, but justice demands that we honour our mothers as our fathers. Why should we care to what degree exactly of mixture we possess European blood and Indian blood? If we feel ever so little gratitude and filial love towards one or the other, do they not constrain us to say: "We Are Metis".

The National Committee of the Metis of the Red River was formed after the survey incident with Louis Riel. The Committee mobilized 500 armed men after reports that Lt. Governor William McDougall, the same man who organized the initial probes into Red River, was coming to take control of Rupert's Land even though the territory had not yet been officially ceded to Canada. McDougall considered the official ceding of the land to be just a formality. The National Committee of the Metis sent him a message forbidding entry into the Territory of the Northwest "without special permission of this Committee", signed by John Bruce, president, and Louis Riel, secretary. McDougall prudently stopped off at Pembina and when he finally crossed the border, was warned back by an armed patrol. He obeyed. Reverend N. J. Richot, describing the formation of the National Committee said, "The council of the nation was assembled and it was resolved to organize a military force after the custom of the country in time of danger and to put it on foot in order to repel the invasion of the country by men in whom could be recognized no authority positively and legally constituted".

The Metis then had a series of fruitless meetings with the Council of Assinibois. It was obvious that a virtual state of anarchy existed and would exist until the Rupert's Land transfer was complete. Riel and 120 men occupied Fort Garry, allowing normal trade and the sitting of local courts on the premises of the Hudson's Bay post. Riel was able, by this occupation, to ensure that the Canadian Party would not have access to the biggest supply of arms and ammunition in the territory.

Riel then proclaimed a Convention of the People of Rupert's Land and invited local parishes to elect 12 delegates from the French and 12 delegates from the English communities. All responded and, after considerable bickering as to tactics — including annexation to the United States — the Convention agreed on a List of Rights. The List was a "remarkable document" which "offered a feasible programme for union with the Dominion and at the same time managed to protect the

interests of virtually all elements of an unusually heterogenous community".

The reaction of the Canadian Party was predictable; they holed up in Dr. Schultz's store, fully armed, and established what they called Fort Schultz. Then they finagled with McDougall to forge the Queen's signature to proclamations and in general defied Riel to do his worst. Riel lined up a cannon in front of the store and Schultz surrendered. He and 45 supporters were promptly jailed. The following morning, Riel took the next step toward control of the territory.

The Declaration of the People of Rupert's Land and the Northwest in fact created a Provisional Government which described the people's rights as British subjects. The declaration offered to enter into negotiations to determine the conditions under which Rupert's Land would enter confederation. Two weeks after the declaration, Louis Riel became President. In the context of international law, Riel's action was well within the legal rights of the Metis. The Hudson's Bay Co. had effectively relinquished control of the territory and the legal transfer had not formally taken place. McDougall, on the other hand, had tried to usurp authority by illegal means. Riel had taken a course of action that had the support of the vast majority of people in the area.

THE NEW NATION

The "New Nation", as it was called, was in full control of the territory by January of 1870. It was a peaceful occupation without bloodshed; nor was any property stolen or damaged. Even the supplies of the Hudson's Bay were kept track of and up to date. The "New Nation" took over the newspaper "Nor'Wester" as the new government's voice. As well as putting the most likely opponents in custody, the Metis instigated regular patrols and avoided any conflict with the Sioux. This done, the Metis established contact with the Canadian Government to open negotiations.

The Canadian Government's reaction was to send "peace commissioners" headed by Donald A. Smith. The commissioners professed to "bring about peaceable union and entire accord among all classes of this land". They presented the Canadian proposals at two public meetings. The Metis agreed to consider the proposals but refused to release prisoners.

Twenty-four delegates from French and twenty-four delegates from English communities were called to a new conven-

tion, called 'The Convention of Forty'. Here the Metis drew up a new Bill of Rights.

Smith approved the new Rights proposal but, as he could not speak for the Canadian Government, he suggested that delegates be sent to Ottawa. The Provisional Government was then restructured to include a legislative assembly. McTavish, who was head of the Hudson's Bay in the area, told the provisional committee, "Form a government for God's sake, I have no power or authority". Riel introduced a motion that the sale of Rupert's Land be renegotiated with the people. This motion was defeated and Riel was angered. The restructured Provisional Government flew the Union Jack until, at the insistence of others, the Metis flag was flown beside it.

Riel's own summary of the events said: "When the Dominion knocked at our doors, it found, not only the Metis in good condition to live without assistance, but the Metis people with a government of its own, free, at peace and working with its own account at the task of civilization which the Company and England could not have accomplished without thousands of troops; a Government with a defined constitution and whose jurisdiction was all the more legitimate and to be respected that it was exercised over a territory that belonged to it".

In summary, it is clear from the foregoing evidence that, contrary to white historians, the Metis could not be called "primitive" or even "semi-primitive", nor could they be called static or resistant to change, as a number of historians have maintained. The Metis were not only accepting and adapting successfully to influences around them, but were actually developing and proposing solutions that were years ahead of their time.

The real insurrection was on the part of the Canadian Party, released by the Metis after the Bay recognized the provisional government. The Party went about the territory agitating and raising support amongst the English settlers. About 500 people were recruited. Led by Boulton, they banded together and planned to march against the Metis. Louis Riel was able to disperse the group when he assured them that the English would be treated fairly, thus heading off a direct confrontation. However, a small group of malcontents, led by Boulton and Scott, were arrested along with the other members of the Party. In the subsequent proceedings, Boulton was pardoned and Scott was executed. These events are now hopelessly confused with a variety of sources presenting different scenarios. In any case, the proceedings caused Schultz to flee and raise support amongst the Orangemen of Ontario.

THE BETRAYAL OF A DREAM

The Metis delegates who were sent to Ottawa were arrested by the Ontario Government for murder. However, the Federal Government stepped in and rescued the delegates as Ontario had no jurisdiction over the matter. The Canadian parliament passed the Manitoba Act, based on the List Rights drawn up by the Metis. However, they deleted the amnesty clause and an Ontario Orangeman posted a \$5,000 reward for the head of Riel. Although the land clause is misrepresented from the List of Rights in the Manitoba Act, the Act nevertheless does assign 1,400,000 acres to the Metis. Sir George Cartier, acting head of government, agreed that Riel should continue to govern in the West until the new Lieutenant Governor arrived.

The Metis delegates, who were assured by Cartier that all was well, were betrayed even as negotiations were taking place. Troops made up for the most part by Orangemen from Ontario, were dispatched west. They started out intent on revenge for the death of Scott, even before the departure of Archibald, the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor. Riel fled Fort Garry as the troops took over. Metis women and children were beaten in the streets and homes and lands were pillaged by these representatives of "civilization". Several Metis who were involved in the lawful execution of Scott were murdered, yet no one was brought to trial. Riel fled to the United States.

The American Fenian Movement now saw an opportunity to convince the Metis to opt for annexation to the United States. Louis Riel was forced to surface to lead a movement against such a measure by the Metis. He became the "unnamed leader" who assisted Lieut. Governor Archibald in resisting Fenian invasion of Canada. The year was 1872 and an election had been called. Sir John A. was in a precarious position; if he supported Riel, he would lose Ontario — on the other hand, if he jailed Riel, he would lose Quebec. Sir John A. did the political thing and paid Riel's "expenses" to cross the American border. Riel was followed to the United States by bounty hunters seeking to collect the \$5,000 reward. After several assassination attempts, Riel decided to return to Canada.

In order to ensure that Sir George Cartier would have a "safe seat" in the elections, Riel declined to run. As fate would have it, Sir George died following the election and Riel was acclaimed in his absence. The next year, 1874, Riel won the seat by a landslide in the General Elections.

Riel now faced trumped-up murder charges brought against him by his political opponents and he fled back to the States, but

in March appeared in Ottawa long enough to register as an M.P. This done, he went to Hull because of threats of arrest. In the meantime, the Manitoba Government banished Riel for five years for failing to appear in court to face the murder charges. In the same election, Sir John A. was defeated and the new government declared a general amnesty with the proviso that Riel be banished for the five-year period.

The Manitoba Act clearly assured land claims for the Manitoba Metis and this will be detailed later under aboriginal rights. However, the distribution of the 1,400,000 acres was hopelessly and deliberately confused in an effort to frustrate the Metis. The ploy was partially successful as many Metis, fed up with the red tape, left to settle in Saskatchewan.

The Metis who went further west to settle in Batoche, Saskatchewan, were about to see history repeat itself. In 1884, the situation in Batoche was almost identical to the situations in 1816 with Grant and 1860 with Riel in Red River. All the issues were the same; land rights, and arrogant decision-making by outsiders. The solutions proposed by the Metis were basically the same; title to land and provincial status. Sir John A. was back in power and the Conservatives were not prepared to be any fairer with the Saskatchewan Metis than they had been with the Manitoba group. Gabriel Dumont and other leaders went south to the United States and persuaded Riel to return and help form a provisional government. This was done and a call to arms was issued.

But there were significant differences too; Saskatchewan was clearly Canadian territory. The C.P.R. had reached the Red River Country, thus permitting faster troop movement, and the Northwest Mounted Police had replaced the Imperial Guard. Finally, there was a new Metis player, Gabriel Dumont, the Prince of the Prairies.

Much has been written about the events of 1885 and the Battle of Batoche. The armed resistance of the Metis against the unjust actions of an oppressive government is now part of the "colourful Canadian past" and has taken on the dimensions of a legend. The Metis, although they won three out of four battles against overwhelming odds, lost the war. They could have won had they gone for the jugular but Riel prevailed against Dumont's plans and persuaded Gabriel that they did not have to win the war. It was Riel's intention to simply establish a base for negotiations. The fall of Batoche spelled the end forever of an autonomous Metis Nation. Gabriel Dumont escaped to the United States and Louis Riel surrendered, in the classic manner and pattern of his predecessor, Cuthbert Grant.

Louis Riel was charged with high treason, basically the result of a desire for vengeance by Orange Ontario. The trial was a mockery of justice but legal enough to hang Louis. His lawyers tried to plead not guilty by reason of insanity, but Riel's addresses to the jury proved otherwise. Riel saw himself as a prophet of the "New World" but the governments' attitude was expressed by the R.C.M.P., "Goddam sonofabitch is gone at last".

The Metis movement disintegrated after the hanging of Louis Riel. The people subsided into their private lives as settlers began to pour into the west. The Metis lands were re-surveyed and the "carpetbaggers" juggled land claims and in general swindled the Metis out of what little they had left. Some adapted and a few adept Metis even prospered; some slipped into the white mainstream and others fled south to the United States . . . and some journeyed north "where you can live and die and never see a white man".

The Modern Metis

THE LIMBO YEARS

After Louis Riel's death, the Metis dispersed and submerged — both as a nation and as a race. "For many of them, the world was a cesspool of unemployment, social ostracism by whites, spiritual and physical degradation, hunger, long-term malnutrition, disease and squalor." In some areas they survived as extended families or colonies. Many simply faded into the background as another kind of non-status Indian. There were sporadic and unsuccessful attempts at forming Metis reserves but these were short lived. However, smouldering just below the surface of the Metis social consciousness were the seeds of a resurrection. As early as 1887 a group founded the L'Union Metisse St. Joseph, "whose purpose was to defend the role of the Metis" in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It was an historical society dedicated to keeping the historical record straight in regards to the Metis role in the development of the west. There were also sporadic attempts at land claims, with some minor successes. This will be developed in more detail later.

After the turn of the century, changes were taking place on a global scale which totally submerged not only the Metis, but Canadians as well. World War I focused the energy and resources of the entire nation on concerns across the seas. Later, during the twenties, most people were too caught up in the heady and turbulent post-war reconstruction to pay any heed to the Metis cause. The Metis themselves were adjusting to the buffeting of this period. Metis who had gone overseas to fight on the battle ground of Europe acquitted themselves honourably and bravely in the service of their country. Many won medals for service beyond the call of duty. Many more lost their lives or were wounded. When they returned, they were still confronted with the same prejudice, the same unemployment and the same social ostracism of an ungrateful white society.

It wasn't until the thirties that the Metis were able to once again assert themselves in a political manner. It took a depression to accomplish this. During the thirties white society finally found out what it was like to live like a Metis. The whites did not like it. The Union movement gained a new impetus and many reforms were demanded throughout the land. A great

clamour went up for jobs, housing, social justice — the very things that had been denied the Metis. Canadians, during the thirties, were still as unsympathetic toward the Metis plight as before; however, some of the social reforms that were called for would benefit the Metis. There was some hope that, through political organization, adjustments to the Metis way of life could be realized. The leadership was there — some Metis had been active in political roles in Indian associations for many years.

This was the beginning of a new militancy. The new associations that developed all had the same *raison d'être* — to "protest against the opposition of foreign authority, rules and regulations". Land claims were most often the central issue and the early successes of these groups led to heavy government opposition.

The reserve Indian suffered the greatest interference from the government. The Indian Act, for example, forbade any person to request from any Indian "any payment or contribution for the purposes of raising a fund or providing money for the prosecution of any claim", on pain of imprisonment or fine. As late as 1969 the limit that an Indian was allowed to contribute to an organization was twenty-five cents per capita.

Since confederation the federal government, regardless of the party in power, had utilized a variety of techniques to thwart any organization of native peoples. The government controlled such things as financing, attendance at meetings, and often withdrew support at critical stages of development. In the west, the R.C.M.P. was used to harass and persecute group leaders. Band support was forbidden and the Indian Agent — who in almost all cases was white — had a whole range of interference and discreditation tactics open to him, including the threat and exercise of legal enfranchisement.

In spite of the hardships that Indian organizations were forced to endure, some did manage to survive. Often "the ghost in the machine" of these organizations were, in fact, Metis people. During the thirties and forties the Indian groups became less and less able to tolerate the Metis presence in their organizations. This occurred mainly because the difference between status and non-status Indians within these structures became more pronounced. Also, about this time, the prairie provinces were beginning to consider the specific plight of the Metis and some governments accepted the Metis as a provincial responsibility.

Another world war and the participation in the armed forces by native peoples (which was the highest per capita voluntary enlistment in the country) served to further heighten political

awareness and public response. When the veterans returned to their homes, the government found it was no longer able to exercise the type of dictatorial control that it had formerly wielded. The native veterans had fought racism in foreign lands and were not content to meekly accept a similar fascist attitude in their own land. Even though the government was no longer able to exercise direct legal or financial control of the Indian organizations, the basic government tactics of obstruction remained the same. In Manitoba the native people were able, by 1954, to organize an annual Indian and Metis conference.

THE DECADE OF THE RADICAL

The policy of the government throughout this period was to pursue a course of action that would encourage assimilation. The reasoning behind this was the mistaken notion that merely by "educating" the native, government could expect him to automatically drift into the mainstream of society and disappear forever as an ethnic entity. Indian children by the thousands were wrenched from their homes and forcibly incarcerated in "residential schools" hundreds of miles from their homes. The horror stories from the institutions of higher learning have been well documented and are part of a shameful past that Canadians would just as soon forget.

If Indians were the victims of federal bureaucratic abuse, the Metis fared little better under provincial jurisdiction. During the fifties and early sixties, the "graduates" of the residential school system found the depressed reserve life unable to support the newly "educated" Indian. More and more of them left the reserve to settle in the city along with their enfranchised brothers and Metis cousins. This created the phenomenon of the urban Indian. Generally speaking, these new urban Indians were under thirty, better educated, more aware, and less willing to accept discrimination. In 1961 they formed an organization called the National Indian Council, and a new phrase was introduced to the Indian vocabulary — 'Red Power'.

The new leadership was far more vocal, and more articulate, than it had been in the past. The news media was actively courted and certain politically oriented Indians attained celebrity status in the white media. During the short-lived existence of the National Indian Council, the leadership was about equally divided between Metis, non-status, and registered Indians. Most of the members were people who had a foot in both the white and Indian worlds. They often held government jobs, or in some

cases were retired from the armed forces. Their skills in organization were more of a bureaucratic nature than a sophisticated political one. The National Indian Council had little or no credibility with the reserve and rural Indians or the Metis communities. The top-heavy structure was viewed with suspicion by the grass roots because it seemed to be all chiefs and no Indians.

This, unfortunately, gave the government an opportunity to question the base of National Indian Council's representation. The government finally withdrew financial support, which ultimately sealed the National Indian Council's doom.

Ironically, a white organization called the Indian-Eskimo Association which was set up by white liberals as a support group to Indian and Metis organizations, continued to get government funding. The organizer — behind the scenes — was an Air Force retired officer, Ernie McEwan, who had developed the Air Forces' 10BX plan for physical fitness. He believed that if there was a simple recipe for physical fitness, then all one had to do was devise the same type of plan in an organizational context and, presto, instant organization — like instant coffee. The I.E.A. would teach Indian groups Robert's Rule of Order: — how to run meetings, keep minutes, etc., and generally engage in "do-gooder" types of activities. It also provided a vehicle whereby "responsible" whites could keep an eye on Indian activities under the guise of support. The fact that the whites competed for the same organizational funding from governments that Indians needed was never viewed as a contradiction of purpose by these white, liberal do-gooders. This was, and still is, a source of contention between the two groups.

In the United States, by the late fifties, a trend toward liberalism was developing, along with a growing Black nationalism. These trends spilled over into Canada and Canadians were forced to re-examine their attitudes toward their racial minorities: black, red, and yellow. The red or Indian minority got the most attention. "From 1960 onwards, the Canadian public became obsessed with its most vocal minority, the Indians." The cultural mosaic became the theme of the Trudeau government — an idea, incidentally, that Louis Riel had proposed 100 years earlier. Lamontagne, a Liberal cabinet minister, became the champion of a kind of dehyphenated Canadianism. A Royal Commission on Multiculturalism was convened and their report recommended funding multicultural initiatives — wherever they came from. The Trudeau braintrust had outdone themselves. The Liberals had devised a plan whereby minorities could

TABLE 3**Post-Riel Metis Organizations**

YEAR	ORGANIZATION	COMMENT
1887	L'Union Metisse St. Joseph	historical/social
1932	Halfbreed Association of Alberta & NWT	see 1938
1937	Metis Association of Saskatchewan	see 1949
1938	Metis Association of Alberta	renamed from 1932
1940	Saskatchewan Metis Society	reorg. from 1937
1940's	Brotherhood of the Plains	demise unknown
1940	Metis Association of Alberta	revived in 1961
1968	Manitoba Metis Federation	
1969	Canadian Metis Society	see 1970
1969	B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians	
1970	Native Council of Canada	from Metis Society
1971	Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association	
1972	Quebec Metis and Non-Status Indian Association	
1972	Union of Nova Scotia	
1972	New Brunswick Association of Non-Status Indians	
1973	Native Association of Newfoundland and Labrador	
1973	NWT Metis and Non-Status Indian Association	

maintain ethnic eccentricities and peculiarities without the basic rights of self-determination.

In the U.S. the civil rights movement had evolved into a Black power movement. The U.S. was forced to make concessions to the louder and louder demands of all sorts of groups. Vast amounts of federal and state money was disbursed to any group

that could articulate its demands loudly enough. If this was happening in the States, could Canada be far behind? The Native People of Canada soon noticed that the "squeaky wheels were getting the grease". Middle class radicals of all sorts were shouting and marching for one cause or another. The more they agitated, the more willing the government was to give them money. The white "radical" organizations were flourishing. As for the natives, they realized that the ground rules for dealing with the government had changed. Where in the past years only docile "yes sire — no sire" type organizations could hope for funding, now we had a situation where the more you marched and demonstrated, the greater the guarantee of financing from the government.

The Native People responded as they had been doing for thousands of years. They changed themselves — this time to suit the demands of the government. If it was marches and demonstrations that got you money, then they would march and demonstrate. The native movement even developed confrontation tactics that attracted serious revolutionaries from Black Panther and Maoist camps as well as French Canadian separatists. The natives were merely utilizing their natural "response-ability". There was the odd native leader who took the new methods more seriously. Among them was Howard Adams, a Berkeley-based Metis, who contributed to the confrontation techniques used mainly in Saskatchewan.

The media, as might be expected, developed an immediate love affair with the notion of "our own red power radicals". During the sixties, these "media-revolutionaries" garnered a great deal of coverage. The grass roots Indians, on the other hand, were generally suspicious of the press and tended to look upon them as the enemy. The Metis were the first to realize that the press played the role of "observer" and it wasn't long before the Metis began to actively pursue the media. They developed a profile, first within the general native movement and then more specifically as Metis. Those in the movement were beginning to understand the significance of the impact of media on the white mind. They quickly learned that revolution and show business were only a breath apart.

The Metis, in most ways, were much worse off than the Indians. With no guaranty under the Indian Act, without viable communities, without land and without treaties, the Metis were the "forgotten people". They needed both provincial and national organizations through which their needs could become known. The stated function of Metis organizations were: to identify problems, establish priorities for solution, develop

awareness of government and citizen group function, gain funding and exert pressure. More often than not, in the beginning the organizations developed more in terms of ideologies and theories than proven needs.

The government took quick note that the group shouting the loudest in the early phase of the red power movement was the Metis. The Indians, because they had (at least theoretically) the mechanisms that served their needs, were less vocal than the Metis, who had none. The Trudeau "braintrust" again found the solution to the "native problem": use the mechanism of organization to de-fuse the revolutionary potential of a spontaneous movement. "Unorganized groups cannot be manipulated, but organized groups can be manipulated, in the best interest of government." A model of this de-fusing process was already in effect. The Company of Young Canadians was a perfect prototype of how the system would work. Middle class radicals had been given what amounted to a guaranteed annual income as a way of incorporating them into the government's bureaucratic structure. The government set up a similar funding mechanism for Metis organizations. Outspoken leaders were encouraged to climb aboard the government bandwagon. A standard joke among the Metis when they encountered one of their brothers dressed in buckskin jacket and sash, was to say, "Oh, are you applying for a government grant?"

As the proponents of red power became ever more visible in the media and because they advocated the notion of complete autonomy, sovereignty and separation, they created a backlash among those Metis who were looking "to become equal partners in society, while retaining a specific identity in the Canadian mosaic". Nevertheless, the movement did give rise to native consciousness and caused a broad expansion of awareness of the Indian/Metis reality in Canada, for both races. It gave rise to hundreds of local and provincial groups, most of which formed and then disbanded in their first year.

The advocates of red power were never able to develop a strong ideological base and, because of a basic lack of substance, the groups that formed around the red power premise soon folded. The people who joined these groups, however, gained valuable experience in terms of interaction with the "establishment". It also served to bring potential leaders into the area of political activity. The red power movement no longer serves any real political role in the Metis communities but it remains functional as a magnet for young Indians and Metis.

The latter part of the 1960's saw the resurgence of a Metis focus in Native affairs in Canada. The Manitoba Metis

Federation, the Saskatchewan Metis Federation and the Alberta Metis Association re-emerged as strong, dynamic groups with solid grass roots support. The federal government was being swamped with requests for funding by a whole rash of new organizations, all of them claiming to be the legitimate representatives of the people. It became impossible to know where the funding should go and so the federal government pressured the stronger associations to form themselves into a national body, along the same pattern as the treaty organizations. The National Indian Brotherhood represented the Indians' concerns in Ottawa and had been able to gain direct dialogue with the federal cabinet. The government encouraged the Metis to do the same thing and by 1970 the Metis across Canada were on the verge of establishing provincial associations and looking toward the formation of a national body to represent them in Ottawa. If the sixties was the decade of the radical, the seventies was the decade of the Metis.

It was apparent that the hostilities between the Indians and the Metis could not be resolved. The National Indian Council had been an attempt to create a joint association to solve mutual problems, but the attempt failed. In 1968, the National Indian Council divided into two camps — The National Indian Brotherhood and the Canadian Metis Society. The Metis realized that they must develop distinct approaches based on their own particular needs for identification and recognition. The government continued to lump all "native problems" together. The Metis were continually frustrated by the failure of government to understand that programmes and grants designed to help Indians failed to solve unique Metis problems. The irony of the situation was that, "The harder the Metis worked, the more attention the Indians received".

The federal government added to this sense of frustration by bureaucratic buck-passing. "We are nothing but a political football. We are not registered Indians so whenever we have any correspondence with the federal government, they tell us to contact the provincial government, which in turn tells us we are just another ethnic group".

The emergence of the Metis Nation as a "state of mind" parallels David Bells' concept of the United Empire Loyalist as non-nation. If "a nation is a psychological entity" and "nationalism is a state of mind", the Metis can be said to be a native component of the "non-nation of modern Canada". The Metis, like the loyalists, experienced a "profound identity crisis stemming from expulsion". In the Metis case it was expulsion from active participation in Confederation as a founding nation.

The Metis found this situation particularly painful inasmuch as they, in truth, were the "real" Canadians — in other words, the only people who were indigenous to North America, recognizing that the original Indians immigrated to these shores through Siberia, and the English and the French came from Europe. The Metis became the victims of "hyperbolic distortions of political warfare that were the operant maxims of the post-revolutionary Loyalist's solution". Faced with the paradox of being a pro-Canadian, anti-white, non-Indian, the Metis — like the Loyalists — had a way out of his dilemma; he created a myth that helped him survive. He insists that he is Metis — the "true Canadian". Unlike the Indians, who saw their separate "nations" as requiring separation from the Canadian state complete with separate boundaries, institutions and economies, the Metis Nation simply needed recognition and a fair participation in confederation — not unlike the manner that Newfoundland joined the Dominion. Had the Canadian government simply walked into Newfoundland and, by force of arms, dispossessed all Newfoundlanders and hung Joey Smallwood, the parallel to the Metis situation would be complete.

"National sentiments rely heavily on mythical interpretation of the past. The nationalist believes that his is a chosen people, that his ancestors were divinely inspired and hence that his nation is in a sense sacred." All of these criteria are fulfilled quite literally in both Metis oral and written history and are immediately recognizable in Riel's writings and diaries. As a conclusion, the Metis, "in an attempt to conserve their autonomy and culture", refused to assimilate into the eastern white civilization and became its victims. Unlike the United States, where ethnic groups were absorbed into the mainstream, in Canada a mosaic pattern developed. As Bell says, Canada evolved what might be called an 'accommodative' political culture. It was now up to the Metis to determine and define their role in that culture.

The Native Council of Canada had its genesis from the Canadian Metis Society. It was originally designed to act as the "group agent in Ottawa and attempt to secure, for individual provinces and territories, the funding of programs designed to meet local needs . . . to achieve full native participation in the mainstream of Canada's social, cultural and economic life". The original priorities were: aboriginal rights, land claims, housing for Metis and non-status Indians, education, native relationship with the law, employment and economic opportunities. As the organization grew, other concerns were added: cultural development, communications, children and youth, drug and alcohol

abuse, environmental protection, health, recreation and social development. The Native Council did not see itself as an adversary of government but rather the approach was to play an advisory role, like a "deputy minister".

The Native Council of Canada was successful on a number of levels in the realization of the stated goals of the organization. National representation was now stabilized and government funding became consistent. The Native Council of Canada developed an effective interface with a wide range of government bodies and institutions and penetrated the House of Commons via the question period. The Council also made contacts with the opposition parties and became very sophisticated in the ways of government. This new sophistication allowed the Council to establish a beach-head in the Federal Cabinet, something Louis Riel could not have imagined. The greatest achievement was the Native Council of Canada's resistance to the assimilation techniques of government and the renewed determination to maintain the cultural integrity of the Metis people.

The Council was not without its failures. The native organizations were now getting money, yet most of the grass roots were as badly off as they had ever been. Conflict between Metis and non-status factions within the organization was not effectively solved and the Council became over-centralized at a time when the government orientation was to decentralize. The N.C.C. failed to maintain stable national representation. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia withdrew their participation and support from the national body. Younger leaders were reluctant to establish a council of elders, fearing their influence on Council policies. The Native Council of Canada unable to establish real power, remained content with the "paper power" afforded the organization by government. The Metis movement across Canada now needs a new cultural awakening at the grass roots level before any more political gains can be made.

ENERGY — THE NEW GOLD OF THE NORTH

As the Metis in Canada were learning to cope with their identity crisis, another crisis was developing on a global scale — the energy crisis. Suddenly, in the early seventies, a great resurgence of interest in the north took place, as a result of discovery of gas and oil. Up until the energy crisis, Canadians in general had

little interest in the North and the Metis were left pretty much alone. The native people who had survived the gold rush of 1880 through 1890 were now threatened with an energy rush by multi-national corporations as well as two levels of government. The Jesuit and Anglican missionaries of the past were now replaced by a new group of missionaries from the "Ecological Mission". They adopted the "wilderness" of the north as their last "great cause", and swarmed in, certain that their cause would be well received by the naturally ecologically conscious natives. They were shocked to find a considerable contrast between Indian and Metis attitudes toward technology. While Indians were opposed to most technological development in favour of a more traditional life style, the Metis were receptive to its introduction. Metis concerns were focused on having significant input into decision-making process involved in the introduction and development of that technology. The Metis were aware of the built-in contradictions of the Indian and ecological missionaries position regarding technology. After all, the Metis saw them come to meetings spouting rhetoric, opposing technological development, then turning around and driving home on ski-doo's.

For the third time in one hundred years, the Metis were faced with the same basic scenario that faced Cuthbert Grant and Louis Riel . . . the Selkirk settlements in 1816 and Batoche in 1885. Long time residents of a "wilderness" were suddenly found to be occupying (if not in actual deeded possession of) land that was of value to an external culture. Even the question of a provincial status for a territory with a native majority was a problem the government was reluctant to deal with until there were enough new immigrants to guarantee a white majority.

One of the most dangerous and glaring differences from the former scenario for the Metis today is the advent of American-based multi-national corporations calling the shots and being buttressed by Canadian provincial and federal policies. All the old "blind spots" in terms of cultural interface are resurfacing.

The crucial difference for the Metis, this time around, is the fact that the Canadian government is no longer the prime mover in the north, the multinational corporations are — and the Metis is treated as a nuisance that has to be dealt with. This time, because there is nowhere for the Metis to retreat to, an erroneous assumption that, "should Northern colonial development continue as it is native people will not survive as a race" has arisen. Fortunately, native people do not rely on "possession" of land to retain their identity. Even the present emphasis

on land claims had no real relationship to, or danger of establishing, sovereignty, but is a demand for a share of the dividends of Canada's "just society".

The Canadian Government is looking for a path to bring northern development into reality in terms of "national interest". But the complexity of the situation became only too evident when the Berger Commission — intended by the government to be a cosmetic tactic — backfired, as a result of Mr. Berger's integrity, into a full-scale issue. The support of the Metis by international bodies increases the pressure to find a solution.

The next decade is crucial to the Metis. The energy crisis of the seventies creates the last possibility of leverage for the Metis to change government policy. Two essential factors are necessary to exercise that leverage: a full understanding of the role of the aboriginal rights and land claims (in the new scenario) and the necessity to foster a rebirth of recognition of the value of Metis consciousness among both the Metis and the Whites alike.

Aboriginal Rights and Land Claims

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS — THE ISSUE

To understand the native relationship to land, one has to disregard entirely the European concepts relating to land. The European concept of land is in terms of possession and security of identity. Land "development" (a notion inconceivable to Indians) is, for the white man, often related to a sense of order based on domination. Possession in terms of deed often carries with it the "right" to exploit that land for a short-term personal gain. This "exploitation right" has been only slightly modified in recent times by a sense of ecology.

To the native, the concept of land has a direct relationship to the native sense of being-in-itself — "the country he inhabits is at the same time the topography of his unconscious . . . thus does the primitive man dwell in his land and at the same time in the land of his unconscious". The Indians say the same thing in a slightly different way: "We are telling you again and again that, without the land, Indian people have no soul, no life, no identity, no purpose . . . we are people of the land. The land is for our children, not for our sale. The land is part of us and we are part of it." The consequences, for the Indian, of forcible disconnection from the land is a spiritual crippling that is only too obvious in today's native communities. The Metis more readily grasped the nature of the white man's relationship to the land than the Indian did and were not prepared to accept "treaty deals" with the government. The Metis' natural affinity to the land and their orientation to it can only be compared to the white man's relationship to the air he breathes.

The concept of "title to land" was alien to the native consciousness, except as a natural birthright. The emphasis, in native culture, was on use of land, not formal possession, a cultural manifestation the eastern land-grabbers were quick to exploit in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The Metis assumed title in the traditional way of the Indian, by reason of their occupation and use. Only the white men and a few of the better educated or suspicious Metis cared about title by law. There is no question that, in the matter of land claims in Canada, morality is on the side of the Metis and the law is on the side of the white man. How Canada decides to deal with this question will

determine "the future of Canada, the quality of its' democracy and its' reputation, real or invented for justice".

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS — THE FACTS

The first reference to native lands in North America came from the pen of Pope Paul III in 1537 in response to Spanish concern over the status of these new people. In his Bull *Sublimis Deus* he said, "Indians are truly men, they should enjoy their liberty and possession of their property". Both English and French royalty assumed title over land in North America occupied by their respective nationals. In 1623, King Louis XIII of France gave all the territories of Hudson's Bay and James Bay to La Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France. The area eventually transferred to England and in 1670 granted to the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay by Royal Charter.

A hundred years later concern over the Status of Indian lands in the British North America led to the Proclamation of 1763: "The several nations or tribes of Indians with whom we are connected and who live under our protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the possession of such parts of our dominion and territories, as not having been ceded to us, are reserved to them, or any of them as their hunting grounds".

The proclamation was intended to set aside land for Indians which "private persons must be forbidden to make purchases or settlements until treaties have been made with the various tribes and satisfaction has been given them for their land". Notwithstanding, Lord Selkirk, just forty-eight years later in 1811, dealt himself 116,000 square miles of land for two dollars and fifty cents, with the Hudson's Bay reserving ten percent for itself as retirement lands for its' employees. The Indians and Metis, of course, had nothing to say about it.

Beyond the proclamation of 1763, the "law of aboriginal rights" applies throughout Canada. The source of those rights is the law of nations, now incorporated into the common law of Canada and confirmed by colonial and Canadian executive and legislative policy. The Metis are in a unique situation but connected to aboriginal rights through their mothers' blood-lines. "The general attitude of government had been that all Metis were treated as having native rights".

In 1906, an order in council determined that the Indian and Metis of northern Saskatchewan still held "aboriginal title" and that it was "in public interest that the whole of the territory be

relieved of the claims of the aborigines". In 1944, Judge W. A. MacDonald of the District court of Alberta, found "that whenever it became necessary or expedient to extinguish Indian rights in any specified territory, the fact that the Halfbreeds also had rights by virtue of their Indian blood" was invariably recognized. These rights co-exist with the rights of Indians. It was considered "advisable, whenever possible, to extinguish the rights of the Halfbreeds and Indians by giving them compensation concurrently".

The nature of aboriginal rights "stems from a basic fact of Canadian history, that the Indian and Inuit peoples were the original, sovereign inhabitants of this country prior to the arrival of the European colonial powers". Title is referred to as "a personal and usufructuary right" or the right of use and occupancy. A tribe could not surrender title but only agree to surrender or limit its' use of the land.

The Proclamation of 1763 declared that land rights could only be alienated at a public meeting or assembly, called for the purpose, and then only to the Crown. Only the British Sovereign had right to extinguish aboriginal title either "by sword, by purchase, by the exercise of complete dominion adverse to the right of occupancy".

The Government of Canada extinguished aboriginal title by treaty in some parts of Canada. In a few cases, the Metis adhere to Indian treaties. The present status of aboriginal rights for the Metis is summed up by Cumming: "Those Metis who have received neither scrip nor land nor treaty benefits, still arguably retain aboriginal claims which have either not been extinguished or for which a claim for compensation is outstanding". The aboriginal rights claims of the Metis is not a question of owning or even completely controlling occupied lands. "They seek not only a role in determining the ways in which the land and other resources are used, but also a just portion of the benefits derived from their exploitation."

ABORIGINAL/METIS CLAIMS

Quite apart from the "reality" of aboriginal rights being recognized and satisfied by the Canadian Government, the concept is the focal point of a great deal of modern Metis organizational strategy. The rights issue is an effective standard or "kukwium" to organize the Metis around a "cause". It not only gives the movement international status in terms of Third and Fourth World development, but becomes a national cause

with many provincial and local implications. It certainly becomes a bargaining tool for Metis seeking a better position in Canadian life. As an organization tool it is extremely effective in providing an issue, or cause, that every Metis can identify with — a cause that is greater than themselves.

The status of aboriginal/Metis claims in pre-Riel days gives us a clearer picture of the nature of these claims. Following the collapse of the Selkirk project, Cuthbert Grant, as detailed earlier, was granted land in the Red River area on which Grantown was founded. With the amalgamation of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Companies, the Bay encouraged the move to the Red River by making a grant of 25 to 30 acres to "heads of families" and several other small settlements were developed at St. Boniface, Fort Pelly, and Fort Ellice. When the Bay purchased the Selkirk settlements lands back in 1835, land was sold and granted on 999 year leases. In 1845, the Metis, as owners of their land, signed treaties with the Sioux.

After Louis Riel, the Manitoba Act of 1870, Section 31, defined the status of the Metis claims in this manner: "And whereas it is expedient, towards the extinguishment of Indian title to the lands in the province, to appropriate a portion of such ungranted lands to the extent of one million four hundred thousand acres thereof, for the benefit of the families of the Halfbreed residents, it is hereby enacted that under regulations to be from time to time made by the Governor General in Council, the Lieutenant-Governor shall select such lots or tracts in such parts of the province as he may deem expedient, to the extent aforesaid and divide the same among the *children of the Halfbreed heads of families* residing in the province at the time of the said transfer to Canada, and at the same shall be granted to the said children respectively in such mode and on such conditions as to settlement and otherwise, as the Governor General in Council shall from time to time determine."

The chief basis of all Manitoba land claims, "the children of halfbreed heads of families" was the first of many 'catch 22' clauses that were to strip thousands of Metis of land that they thought was guaranteed by the Manitoba Act. The Act was revised by Order in Council in 1871, to state that "every Halfbreed resident in Manitoba on July 15th, 1870 was eligible to receive a share of the land", but not before hundreds had left Manitoba in disgust over the only too intentional confusion created by the government. In fact, no land was actually distributed until a full five years later in late 1876 — 200,000 acres of which was advertised for sale in Ontario realtors' advertisements.

It did not take long for the vultures to descend; by the time the Hudson's Bay, the Selkirk settlers, the Canadian Pacific Railroad, the Church and the crown lands were all established in Manitoba, there was precious little left for the Metis. Those Metis who were able to hold out long enough to establish their title were offered scrip instead of title. This practice of the issuance of scrip led to a horrendous range of exploitation and downright illegal dealing as the Canadian version of the carpetbaggers seized land in hopes of a land boom when eastern settlers finally arrived. The Metis land was put up for sale at fifty cents an acre.

In Saskatchewan, the scenario was repeated in 1885 creating the same kind of confusion as to whether or not the Metis claims had in fact been extinguished in both provinces. When the vultures and carpetbaggers thought that the carcass was picked clean, they stopped making treaties in 1923 and in 1927 made it illegal for natives to raise money among themselves to prosecute land claims.

The basis for the Metis claims fall into four categories: (1) claims based on aboriginal rights; (2) claims based on unjust distribution of land or scrip; (3) adhesions to Indian treaties by Metis; (4) miscellaneous individual or small group claims based on local conditions. The courts have rarely rejected the Metis claims outright in terms of validity or viability, but have been content to rely on the hopelessly confused legal, political and departmental mechanisms to impede claims.

The Indian Act and the British North America Act established a policy of paternalism toward native peoples and only too often led to the exploitation of Indian land with little, or token, participation by the Indians.

The basic government policy was assimilation, as quickly as possible. The Metis became victims of frequent federal/provincial buck passing, especially since the Metis were judged by the federal authorities as non-native, therefore "a provincial responsibility". Indian and Metis claims had been handled, up until 1965, by a three-man Board of Arbitrators when it was expanded to a five-person Indian Claims Commission and later, in 1971, to an Indian Claims Commissioner.

The Government's 1969 White Paper suggested sweeping changes to the Indian Act and was a restatement of the assimilationist policies of the past. The Indian people rejected the White Paper totally and responded with their own papers called, respectively, the Red and the Brown Papers; Prime Minister Trudeau flatly denied that Indian and Metis had any aboriginal rights claims at all in a modern Canada. However, he

was forced to change his mind as a result of several court decisions that inferred, if not admitting outright, aboriginal rights. The Federal Government announced in 1973 that it was prepared to "negotiate settlements" — in effect to return to the business of making treaties.

The Native Council of Canada presented a brief to the Prime Minister in April of 1973 outlining the basic position of the modern Metis. "Our people are found across the entire length and breadth of this country, very often regarded as squatters on land which their ancestors have always used and occupied . . . They have been tricked out of it or deprived of it by one means or another."

The Native Council of Canada warns that the same mistakes are being made today as in the 1870's and that "solutions cannot be imposed on us however well-meaning an authority from on high. Solution must arise from our own communities, and attuned to our own conception of our needs and possibilities". The solutions suggested have a much broader base than specific acreage in land or dollar figures in compensation. The brief claims that, since the government is responsible for the legal tangle that the native claims must go through, the government should pay for historical land claims research projects carried out by the Metis organization.

The land claims have, since the energy crisis, become a political issue, in the context of the Northwest Territories as an energy source. In the political arena are: native organizations, federal and provincial governments, international corporations, ecologists, churches, judges, various commissions, as well as socio-political hustlers of one sort or another getting into the act. The implications are deadly serious for the native people who have for generations lived in the North and see it as their own land. Any land claim settlement in the North requires a critical evaluation by the native people, themselves, of how they want their future and their children's future to unfold. The problem facing the native is developing a base from which to ask the appropriate questions before they can identify the proper answers.

The Berger Commission in the McKenzie Valley, the Alaskan and James Bay Settlements and the machinations in Northern Manitoba, British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories are all useful vehicles for the demonstration of the role of land claims in modern Canada. The Native People in all these areas are categorically opposed to the imposition of decisions by a "foreign" source without the involvement of the people in the decision-making process in a meaningful way. The

government could solve this problem, along with most of the issues, simply by providing the people in the area with the responsibility of developing an alternate plan. The real issue is not whether technology is good or bad, but rather whether or not the native people are going to have access to the decision-making process. The question is not whether there is going to be any development in the north, the question is: are native people going to help decide what kind of development is going to take place?

Landmark solutions have surfaced in recent years: the Nishga claim, for instance. The Nishga people of Northwest British Columbia have been fighting whites for their rights since 1887 and have occupied their land for an estimated 10,000 years without signing a treaty with anyone. Over several generations and in a variety of courts in Victoria, London, England, and in the Supreme Court of Canada, the Nishga have fought for their rights. In an historic split decision, the Supreme Court in 1973 technically ruled against the Nishga. However, the question of aboriginal rights was established as an unresolved but viable issue. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 radically departed from other settlements and provided for the land and money with native corporations to administer them. The James Bay Agreement not only established the significance of aboriginal rights but took a few faltering steps toward providing a framework in which Indians themselves played a role in developing the terms of the agreement to foster the maintenance of their present lifestyle. The natives of the Northwest Territories, in the formation of the "Dene Nation" concept provided another key idea in the development of characteristically native solutions to modern dilemmas.

Modern Metis Consciousness

THE CULTURAL INITIATIVE

Modern Metis leadership has been plagued by an artificial division between political activism and cultural or artistic expression. The problem was put succinctly at the fifth annual convention of the Native Council of Canada. The spokesman for the British Columbia delegation, disturbed by the inclusion of cultural activities at a convention whose theme was unity and aboriginal rights, stated: "Our homes are going to be torn up by pipelines, hydro developments and various other things, and we're fiddle-farting around with jigging contests. I just don't understand." Another delegate from Alberta responded immediately: "As for jigging and contests — I'm for that. I'm a jigger, I'm a fiddler, and I don't want any sucker to tell me that I can't do that any time, any place. That's part of my culture and I'll fight anybody that says it's not part of my culture."

The two extremes that were expressed by these two delegates is the dilemma facing much of the present Metis leadership in Canada. There are those who believe that active political posturing can only make things difficult.

"If you take on the establishment head-on, you are just indicating to them ways of making better chains for you. To meet them head-on is just suicide. What you have to do is approach the whole thing obliquely. You have to change people's ideas, and the only way you can do that is through the media. You have to attack on a cultural, rather than a political level."

The modern Metis, especially in the eastern provinces, need to realize a solid cultural base before significant political gains may be achieved. The Metis activists who reject the need for cultural renaissance, such as Howard Adams, fear a "cultural colonialism" imposed somehow by contact with white society. The fear is as unfounded and paranoid as the establishment fear of "red nationalism". The executive of the Native Council of Canada have, from time to time, used both techniques for penetrating the consciousness of the larger society. The Indians, for example, who ride in full regalia in a parade are as harmless to the image of the "real Indian" as the rhinestone cowboys in the same parade are to the "real cowboy".

Howard Adams states that "the Metis has internalized the myths of inferiority", then claims it is wrong for the Metis to try and change these myths. "It is useless for us to become involved in a struggle to improve our image, because native people did not create these images."

The modern Metis are rapidly adopting, in a modern context, as many symbols of the traditional Metis lifestyle as possible. The Native Council of Canada, in 1976, reintroduced the flag of Louis Riel and made it the official flag of the Metis people. At a provincial board meeting of the Ontario Metis Non-Status Indian Association in January of 1978, the Metis sash was adopted as an official badge of office of the association. There is, of course, the danger of imitating traditional ways as a kind of cultural eccentricity, but that is the "kindergarten" of the modern Metis cultural renaissance. As the Metis become more aware of themselves as a unique cultural entity, they will evolve broader social, artistic, and eventually political expressions that accurately reflect the role of Metis consciousness in Canadian life. The key is not imitation, or even revival of traditional ways, but rather evolution of self-actualization by the Metis individual. Through increased awareness of his heritage, an understanding of his role in modern Canada will emerge.

The problem facing the Metis community today is how to begin the process of cultural education. Certain conditions have to exist in the environment of those who are to learn. Maslow stated that an individual requires food, shelter, a sense of love, of belonging, of self-esteem, and the opportunity to self-actualize before he will develop the desire, or need, for education. The task of the Metis community is extremely difficult, and the Metis have to develop their own solutions and establish these conditions for themselves and their children. The need for creative thinking by all sectors of the Metis community is essential to the process.

Cultural development as a political strategy is a viable vehicle for change, simply because it is a non-threatening activity to most sectors of the establishment. In fact, multi-cultural policies of the 60's and 70's make funding available for culture-related activities that can have a powerful effect on those who take part. The pitfalls of cultural colonialism and ethnic eccentricity can be avoided by careful development in terms of local organization and participation. But this development must be backed by an increased emphasis on cultural priorities by local, provincial, and national Metis organizations.

MEDIA AND THE ROLE MODEL

Although Howard Adams has decried image improvement and belittles attempts by active leadership to penetrate the C.R.T.C. and the C.B.C., he contradictorily admits the effects of media images on his own life. "Native people cannot avoid seeing the cultural images and symbols of white supremacy because they are everywhere in society, especially in movies, television, comic books, and textbooks. As these native children grow up, these white supremacist images become more alive, but natives are powerless to do anything about them. Consequently, the children internalize inferior images as part of their true selves, often with strong feelings of shame. As a result, I attempted to disassociate myself from everything and everyone that appeared halfbreed. I wanted to be a successful white man in mainstream society."

It would be hard to find a better description of the need to develop strong positive Metis models for the Metis people to identify with, and for the proliferation of those models through media of mainstream society. Although many people in the white society take "image" for granted, or regard it as superficial, that luxury is only available to those who have established their image in the mainstream society. Certainly the emphasis that the Black movement in the United States placed on their "Black is Beautiful" campaign can hardly be called insignificant or superficial in terms of its penetration into white culture. Metis models do exist, but they are rarely identified specifically as Metis, or emerge only in the traditional or historic sense.

There has been an increasingly wider use of the media by Metis during the past ten years. More and more books, magazines, newspapers, and newsletters are being published by the Metis themselves. In the beginning this material reached only a small number of people and mostly in native communities. Now, however, this is changing. The media generated by natives is penetrating into the majority culture, even into the academic world of the universities. The Metis are becoming aware of the need to develop their understanding of the function of media to produce in whatever medium they choose, rather than be limited by the majority society's prerogatives. Gains are rapidly being made in this regard by various provincial communications groups, such as Alberta Native Communications Society, who have access to North American satellite broadcasting. The most important steps to be taken now are: to achieve access to production in broadcasting; to maintain a

unique point of view rather than adopt the white-oriented historic frame of reference; to penetrate professional showbusiness on the entertainment level as well as creating documentary or information oriented production. These are all essential elements in the development of Metis consciousness and its' role in Canadian society.

RAISING METIS CONSCIOUSNESS

There is an extant, strong, identity base that the Metis can build upon — the legacy of Louis Riel. However, the western Metis image and cultural characteristics that now serve as a bridge to connect the halfbreed on a national scale, must not rely solely on the historic context. It must now develop an awareness of values in a modern context, and of the Metis' contribution — not only in Canadian history — but also in present day Canadian life. There have been significant gains over the past ten years, but this is only the beginning in terms of what is needed.

An example of a successful consciousness raising event was the "Back to Batoche" festivals held in Saskatchewan for the past several years. Federal and provincial governments agreed to fund the event providing it was not used as a political rally. Based on local and provincial co-operation, the "Back to Batoche" movement had a national impact. Thousands of Metis from all across Canada travelled to Saskatchewan to participate in an event designed mainly to bring Metis people together to enjoy their new-found identity and sense of national purpose. The cynics in the movement dismissed the event as "cultural imperialism", but only because they neglected to see the importance of the human quality of the experience, and the personal value it had to the individual Metis. The experience had a pronounced effect in the Metis world with implications far beyond the control of any group or government.

The "Back to Batoche" movement and other events like it could very well be the basis of a more coherent programme of cultural awareness and development.

The significance of this kind of event may well escape the understanding of those who, in contrast, think marches, sit-ins, and demonstrations are still effective when dealing with the majority society.

In the early sixties a research study was conducted in the Lesser Slave Lake area to determine the self-image evaluation of native children. (See Table 4) In that area at least, Metis children rated themselves eighth on a scale of twenty-one. Indians, in

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF SOCIAL DISTANCE QUOTIENTS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN
IN THE LESSER SLAVE LAKE AREA BY ETHNIC GROUPS, 1961

I Indians		II Metis		III Whites	
1. Indians (Canadian)	1.52	1. Canadians	1.10	1. Canadians	1.07
2. Canadians	1.77	2. Americans	1.66	2. Americans	1.21
3. Americans	1.89	3. Indians (Can.)	1.79	3. British (Ir., Sc.)	1.54
4. Fr. Canadians	2.16	4. French	1.92	4. Fr. Canadians	1.58
5. British (Ir., Sc.)	2.24	5. British (Ir., Sc.)	1.97	5. French	1.65
6. Metis	2.68	6. Fr. Canadians	2.11	6. Swedish	1.66
7. French	2.79	7. Dutch	2.52	7. Norwegians	1.81
8. Norwegians	2.90	8. Metis	2.55	8. Ukrainians	2.08
9. Eskimo	3.30	9. Swedish	2.56	9. Dutch	2.13
10. Jews	3.37	10. Germans	2.68	10. Germans	2.20
11. Swedish	3.37	11. Indians (India)	2.72	11. Indians (Can.)	2.60
12. Germans	3.38	12. Norwegians	2.84	12. Eskimos	2.79
13. Negroes	3.50	13. Eskimos	3.00	13. Poles	2.95
14. Indians (India)	3.53	14. Chinese	3.19	14. Hungarians	3.04
15. Dutch	3.56	15. Poles	3.23	15. Negroes	3.04
16. Poles	3.60	16. Ukrainians	3.27	16. Indians (India)	3.05
17. Ukrainians	3.79	17. Jews	3.30	17. Metis	3.07
18. Hungarians	3.90	18. Negroes	3.32	18. Chinese	3.29
19. Chinese	4.09	19. Hungarians	3.71	19. Jews	3.43
20. Hutterites	4.52	20. Russians	3.89	20. Russians	3.74
21. Russians	5.46	21. Hutterites	4.12	21. Hutterites	4.20
Average Ethnic Score	3.20	Average Ethnic Score	2.73	Average Ethnic Score	2.51
Spread in Distance	3.94	Spread in Distance	3.02	Spread in Distance	3.13

*From: *The Metis in Alberta Society*, B. Y. Card, G. K. Hirabayashi, C. L. French, 1963

fact, rated Metis higher than the Metis rated themselves, but not as low as they were rated by whites — seventeenth. The revival of native awareness would probably change that scale if the test were done today.

However, much still remains to be done. A native, John Cuthand, echoes the thoughts of most leaders today. "The real issues Riel and Dumont fought for are the issues Metis people are fighting for today." It is on that basis that the new awareness must develop.

The social status of today's Metis is summed up in a single word — "marginal". Whether in the bush of Northern Ontario or on road allowances in the prairies, on marginal farmland in B.C., or on the fringes of industrialized areas, the one feature common to all Metis is their "marginality". There is a certain irony in the fact that their very marginality or "forgotten people" status gives them more in common than most other Canadians have with each other.

The Native Council of Canada put it even more bluntly in a paper in 1973. "We are not speaking of low-income people we are talking about no-income people." Metis are likely to be found at the bottom of every social ladder one might name. In terms of schooling, housing, and employment, the Metis are at the bottom. The only lists Metis head are those for infant mortality, school dropouts, occupants of jails, and suicide. Of course there are success stories and exceptions to all of these conditions. But as a people — ethnic or racial — the Metis do not have a proportionate share of the fruits of the so-called just society. Nevertheless the Metis are, in terms of political and self-actualization, in the best condition since the days of Louis Riel. The role of native organizations have proven its value on several levels, creating a sense of racial or ethnic cohesion.

Although the political status of today's Metis has improved considerably, the ethnic status of today's Metis is largely mythical in both the best and worst sense of the word. At it's worst, it becomes a catch-all for people with no identity to hang on to and is "created primarily by common threat from without" and it becomes a kind of "non-culture" for the Metis themselves. In the best sense it becomes "non-nation" or "psychological nation" in David Bell's context and is identifiable in terms of its own communication network, parallel to, but independent of, those of the Inuit, Indian, or White. Since the function of myth-making is to bolster the confidence to act and creates a belief that things can be done, myth-making in the Metis context becomes necessary for independent actions.

BASE FOR TOMORROW

The Canadian public is beginning to realize that there is an important distinction between assimilation and integration, and the supposition that native people are, or ever will be, assimilated into Canadian life is totally unrealistic. The government is beginning to discard assimilation features of their native policies in the light of a new awareness of the native reality in Canada. Today there are more persons of native ancestry than ever before. The native population is the fastest growing racial group, per capita, in Canada in spite of the high infant mortality rate. The fact is that all of the races and ethnic groups in Canada are being integrated into the psychological and geo-physical reality that is North America and that **THE METIS ARE THE ONLY ETHNIC GROUP INDIGENOUS TO THE CONTINENT**. All other races, including Indian and Inuit, came from elsewhere at some other time. Integration is a two-way street and the white majority society is reflecting the native reality more and more specifically as the years go by.

The reality of North America is the architect of the consciousness of its people and, to extend the Jungian concept of mind and earth, let me quote my own thinking in *Red and White*. The pre-Columbian European created a physical and social super-structure for himself that might be described as a labyrinth. When a European child was born, he was introduced to this maze and spent his lifetime searching through the many passages. Within that structure, with rare exceptions, persons were born, lived, and died without ever knowing a sense of freedom, peace or enlightenment. When the European came to North America, he brought with him his closed super-structure in the name of civilization. Fortunately, it did not fit the gestalt of the North American continent. Here, closed systems do not work, and the European was forced to create both an entrance and an exit to his super-structure.

The North American continent, in its own way, shapes the type of super-structure that it will accept. It has the quality of a self-correctional process almost cybernetic in its function. This is the natural process that is North America, and a process that is natural to its indigenous people, the Metis.

In order for the Metis to assume their proper role in modern Canadian society, a number of factors must be developed simultaneously. First, the aboriginal rights of the Metis must become a reality so that the minimal conditions for learning may be met. Secondly, the Metis must be allowed to be educated and developed in terms of their own inherent cultural characteris-

tics, and finally, once that process becomes a reality, the context must be communicated to the majority society. This means, by and large, access to modern print and electronic media and other means of communication. Then and only then will the full impact of the consciousness of the Metis people be evident in the mosaic of Canadian society. In political terms, the role of the Metis as a founding partner in the Canadian confederacy must be recognized and guaranteed in a new British North America Act, along with the French and English.

Again, to quote briefly from *Red on White*: "What I have to say is that the modern world of technology, the electronic, tribal total-systems cybernetic society, is the real manifestation of the potential Metis personality. We no longer have to live on the road allowances and margins of North American society. What we have to do is go out into the world and become the manifestation of what the real North American is going to become — the ideal, whole man. We, as Metis, can represent the best possible example of what everyone in North America can eventually become."

Conclusions

SUMMARY OF METIS PERSPECTIVE

This book demonstrates that, from the Metis point of view, current conceptions of Metis history are totally — albeit inadvertently — misrepresented by most academic historians. Contrary to the implications and assumptions of most writing on the Metis, the Metis see themselves through their oral traditions and myths as:

- (1) A race apart from both white and Indians and the only race indigenous to Canada;
- (2) Having established a viable — if conceptually invisible to white perception — civilization at least a century before confederation;
- (3) A founding nation equal to the French and the English in the development and growth of Confederation;
- (4) A people shamelessly exploited, initially by a minority of political and land-grabbing carpetbaggers, and presently by the majority of Canadians through their indifference to the very real plight of the Metis people;
- (5) An ethnic and racial component with great potential for future development and contribution to Canadian life — if the opportunity to unfold that potential is returned to them via aboriginal rights and land claims;
- (6) A people capable of building and designing their own future on their own terms within the context of the recognition of their reality so long denied them and as presently focused in the northwest and far north of Canada.

THE REALITY OF THE METIS MYTH

The role of so-called myth in oral and/or non-linear culture, such as that of the Metis, is of much greater significance in terms of self-identification and self-realization than can be conceived by most western European linear minds. What the Metis think of themselves, in terms of their past, present and future, is far more real to them than the dictates of conventional history, law, and government policy in a majority society that barely even recognizes the existence of a great, proud, and significant people.

The prophecies of Louis Riel are the song of the Metis soul and they will be sung, if necessary, in the face of the cacaphony

of international corporations, but preferably in the synchronistic harmony of a pluralistic and truly Canadian reality. The song of the Metis is already being heard by thousands of non-status Indians who are uniting with the traditional Metis in a participation mystique that is launching a whole new movement in Canada. But before the majority of Canadians can hear the Metis song, much must be done.

The young and old alike must be prepared for education and then educated to the almost forgotten realities of their people. Organizations like ONTARIO METIS AND NON-STATUS INDIAN ASSOCIATION must communicate the reality of the "myth" in forms more conducive to that communication than history books, or even theses and dissertations. Through poetry, song, film, and drama communicated through all of the media that have such a powerful effect on the quality of awareness we have about our reality, the song of the Metis must be sung.

This is how myth, echoing in the memory of the soul, regenerates the mangled spirit of a nearly-defeated people. This is how the consciousness of a people, dominated for a time by the insanity of an invader, comes to resurrection. This is how the Metis myth will become a reality.

THE REALITY OF METIS REALITY

A balance must be achieved. It is evident that the most exotic rhetoric is meaningless in the face of horrible poverty and alienation. There are many, many hard, cold, and only too real problems of housing, education and land claims to be solved. The recognition of injustice has been accomplished in the last decade. The compensation for that injustice is slowly coming to fruition in this decade. The greatest care and thought must be taken by the Metis, by government, and by the Canadian people to avoid a repetition of the tragedies of 1869 and 1885 — and they could easily be repeated in the closing decades of this century. Above all, the Metis must be recognized as a people who — in the greatness of their race — have the seeds of the solutions to their own problems. They need only the space and light to grow.

This book is dedicated to the day when all Canadians can join the Metis as they say to each other:

"SING YOUR SONG — YOUR CHILDREN ARE STRONG"

"WE ARE METIS"

Appendix

THE DECLARATION OF THE PEOPLE OF RUPERT'S LAND

IT IS ADMITTED BY ALL MEN AS A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE THAT THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY COMMANDS THE OBEDIENCE AND RESPECT OF ITS SUBJECTS. IT IS ALSO ADMITTED THAT A PEOPLE, WHEN IT HAS NO GOVERNMENT, IS FREE TO ADOPT ONE FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN PREFERENCE TO ANOTHER, TO GIVE OR REFUSE ALLEGIANCE TO THAT WHICH IS PROPOSED.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THESE PRINCIPLES, THE PEOPLE OF RUPERT'S LAND HAD RESPECTED THE AUTHORITY OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY EVEN IF IT HAD BEEN FAR FROM ANSWERING THE WANTS OF THE PEOPLE. BUT, CONTRARY TO THE LAW OF NATIONS, THE COMPANY HAD TRANSFERRED TO CANADA ALL THE RIGHTS WHICH IT HAD OR PRETENDED TO HAVE IN THIS TERRITORY, BY TRANSACTIONS WHICH THE PEOPLE WERE CONSIDERED UNWORTHY TO BE MADE ACQUAINTED.

1ST — WE, THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE IN COUNCIL ASSEMBLED AT UPPER FORT GARRY ON THE 24TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1869, AFTER HAVING INVOKED THE GOD OF NATIONS, RELYING ON THESE FUNDAMENTAL MORAL PRINCIPLES, SOLEMNLY DECLARE IN THE NAME OF OUR CONSTITUENTS AND IN OUR OWN NAMES, BEFORE GOD AND MAN, THAT FROM THE DAY ON WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WE ALWAYS RESPECTED ABANDONED US, BY TRANSFERRING TO A STRANGE POWER THE SACRED AUTHORITY CONFIDED TO IT, THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH-WEST BECAME FREE AND EXEMPT FROM ALL ALLEGIANCE TO THE SAID GOVERNMENT.

2ND — THAT WE REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE THE AUTHORITY OF CANADA, WHICH PRETENDS TO HAVE A RIGHT TO COERCE US AND IMPOSE UPON US A DESPOTIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT, STILL MORE CONTRARY TO OUR RIGHTS AND INTERESTS AS BRITISH SUBJECTS THAN WAS THAT GOVERNMENT TO WHICH WE HAD SUBJECTED OURSELVES THROUGH NECESSITY UP TO A RECENT DATE.

3RD — THAT BY SENDING AN EXPEDITION ON THE 1ST OF NOVEMBER, ULT., CHARGED TO DRIVE BACK MR. WILLIAM MCDougALL AND HIS COMPANIONS COMING IN THE NAME OF CANADA TO RULE US WITH THE ROD OF DESPOTISM AND WITH A PREVIOUS NOTIFICATION TO THAT EFFECT, WE HAVE BUT ACTED CONFORMABLY TO THE SACRED RIGHT WHICH COMMANDS EVERY CITIZEN TO OFFER ENERGETIC OPPOSITION TO PREVENT HIS COUNTRY BEING ENSLAVED.

4TH — THAT WE CONTINUE AND SHALL CONTINUE TO OPPOSE WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH THE ESTABLISHING OF THE CANADIAN AUTHORITY IN OUR COUNTRY UNDER THE ANNOUNCED FORM, AND IN CASE OF PERSISTENCE ON THE PART OF THE CAN/DIAN

GOVERNMENT TO ENFORCE ITS OBNOXIOUS POLICY ON US BY FORCE OF ARMS, WE PROTEST BEFOREHAND AGAINST SUCH AN UNJUST AND LAWFUL COURSE, AND WE DECLARE THE SAID CANADIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBLE BEFORE GOD AND MEN FOR THE INNUMERABLE EVILS WHICH MAY BE CAUSED BY SO UNWARRANTABLE A COURSE.

BE IT KNOWN THEREFORE, TO THE WORLD IN GENERAL AND TO THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT IN PARTICULAR, THAT AS WE HAVE ALWAYS HERETOFORE SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED OUR COUNTRY IN FREQUENT WARS WITH THE NEIGHBORING TRIBES OF INDIANS, WHO ARE NOW ON FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH US, AND WE ARE FIRMLY RESOLVED IN FUTURE NOT LESS THAN IN THE PAST, TO REPEL ALL INVASIONS FROM WHATSOEVER QUARTER THEY MAY COME.

AND FURTHERMORE, WE DO DECLARE AND PROCLAIM IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE OF RUPERT'S LAND AND THE NORTH-WEST, THAT WE HAVE ON THE SAID 24TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1869, ABOVE MENTIONED, ESTABLISHED A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND HOLD IT TO BE THE ONLY LAWFUL AUTHORITY NOW IN EXISTENCE IN RUPERT'S LAND AND THE NORTH-WEST WHICH CLAIMS THE OBEDIENCE AND RESPECT OF THE PEOPLE.

THAT MEANWHILE WE HOLD OURSELVES IN READINESS TO ENTER INTO SUCH NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AS MAY BE FAVOURABLE FOR THE GOOD GOVERNMENT AND PROPRIETY OF THIS PEOPLE.

IN SUPPORT OF THIS DECLARATION, RELYING ON THE PROTECTION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, WE MUTUALLY PLEDGE OURSELVES ON OATH, OUR LIVES, OUR FORTUNES, AND OUR SACRED HONOUR TO EACH OTHER.

METIS ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA BRIEF*

This brief is being presented to the government of Alberta by, and on behalf of, a group of citizens who came to feel that their backs are against the wall. These citizens have historically attempted to preserve a way of life socially and economically, and politically distinct from the way of life adopted by the white majority in this society. Now they are faced with a vast range of pressures tending to strike away the basis of their specific ways. Not the least of these pressures is that on the land the Metis people have historically occupied.

We, as a people, have retreated before the advance of white

*from *The Metis, Canada's Forgotten People* D. Bruce Sealey, and Antoine S. Lussier, 1975, pps. 180-181.

society for just over one hundred years in Western Canada. We now find ourselves with no further opportunity to retreat. We have accepted the necessity to adjust ourselves to the economic and social facts of life in Alberta; to seek training, skills, and assistance that will allow us, over time, to move into the mainstream, maintaining at the same time as much as possible of our traditional ways and beliefs.

Our history has been a long retreat before your advance. We have moved northward and westward since our attempt to establish ourselves as a legitimate political force in Canada when in 1870, we were defeated by the Imperial army of your ancestors.

The treaty Indian peoples made their collective reckonings with your forebearers, and as part of their reckonings received land settlements. The white people who came to Western Canada historically came for the land. Individually many Metis over the years have made their reckonings with the dominant society and have thereby acquired stakes in the society the same as those of most white people. Those of us represented here, however, are the remaining representatives of a people who preferred an attempt to retreat and preserve their way of life to the acceptance of any terms of settlement. Historically, we have been formally landless, although we always considered that we had a moral claim.

On the record, our forebearers made a choice which, if not the best was not necessarily the worst. The Treaty Indian peoples have reaped, on the whole, little but pain from their settlements with past governments. Moreover, and this is no small consideration, our retreat had its dignity as a fighting retreat. We have not forgotten Fort Garry and Batoche . . . the Metis people on the whole in Alberta have been a forgotten people. They have been, of all the racial and ethnic groups in Alberta, the people who have reaped the least of the benefits of social, economic, and political advancement in the province, and who have suffered historically the most incredible levels of privation on all fronts . . . that privation has been closely linked with the specific status of the Metis people with respect to the land question, and with the wishes of the Metis people to preserve a traditional way of life in the face of the advance of white society into the Northwest. Now that the game is up, now that there is no longer the possibility of retreat, now that we are accepting the need to come to terms with the predominance of white society and its norms and values in Alberta, our future is tied to the land question just as thoroughly as the past had been tied to the land question. . .

NATIVE COUNCIL OF CANADA BRIEF TO PRIME MINISTER — SUMMARY

1. The Metis and non-status Indians of Canada have lost the land which was once theirs.
2. But our aboriginal rights to land, recognized through the years by Canadian and provincial governments, are valid today. We can prove that we have in the past been treated as Indians under Section 91(24) of the B.N.A. Act but are not subject to the Indian Act.
3. We ask for a new deal for native people in this country.
4. We ask for money \$7,527,000.00 to enable our provincial associations to research our historical rights and our land rights in detail. We wish to use the knowledge so gained as a springboard from which a new deal for our people can be reached so that we, too, may share the benefits of Canada's stability, propriety and wealth.
5. We cannot, however, allow our people to stay in their present situation of poverty and alienation until our research is finished.
6. We ask, as an earnest of the federal government's good faith, that they accept their responsibilities to us and declare their readiness immediately to negotiate to meet the pressing problems our people face. . .

DENE DECLARATION — A STATEMENT OF RIGHTS

We, the Dene of the Northwest Territories, insist on the right to be regarded by ourselves and the world as a nation.

Our struggle is for the recognition of the Dene Nation by the Government and people of Canada and the peoples and governments of the world.

As once Europe was the exclusive homeland of the European peoples, Africa the exclusive homeland of the African peoples, the New World, North and South America was the exclusive homeland of the Aboriginal Peoples, the Amerindian and the Inuit.

The New World, like other parts of the world, has suffered the experience of colonialism and imperialism. Other peoples have occupied the land — often with force — and foreign governments have imposed themselves on our people. Ancient civilizations and ways of life have been destroyed.

Colonialism and imperialism are now dead or dying. Recent years have witnessed the birth of new nations or rebirth of old nations out of the ashes of colonialism.

As Europe is the place where you will find European countries with European governments for European peoples, now also you will find in Africa and Asia the existence of African and Asian countries with African and Asian governments for the African and Asian peoples.

The African and Asian peoples — the peoples of the Third World — have fought for and won the right to self-determination, the right to recognition as distinct peoples and the recognition of themselves as nations.

But in the New World, the native peoples have not fared so well. Even in countries in South America where the native peoples are the vast majority of the population, there is not one country which has an Amerindian government for the Amerindian peoples.

Nowhere in the New World have the native peoples won the right to self-determination and the rights to recognition by the world as a distinct people and as Nations.

While the native people of Canada are a minority in their homeland, the native people of the Northwest Territories, the Dene and the Inuit, are a majority of the population of the Northwest Territories.

The Dene find themselves as part of a country. That country is Canada. But the Government of the Northwest Territories is not the government of the Dene. These governments were not the choice of the Dene — these were imposed on the Dene.

What we the Dene are struggling for is the recognition of the Dene Nation by the governments and peoples of the world.

And while there are realities we are forced to submit to, such as the existence of a country called Canada, we insist on the right to self-determination as a distinct people and the recognition of the Dene Nation.

We, the Dene people, are part of the Fourth World. And as the peoples and Nations of the world have come to recognize the existence and rights of those people who make up the Third World, the day must come and will come when the nations of the Fourth World will come to be recognized and respected. The

challenge to the Dene and the world is to find the way for the recognition of the Dene Nation.

Our plea to the world is to help us in our struggle to find a place in the world community where we can exercise our right to self-determination as a distinct people and as a nation.

What we seek then is independence and self-determination within the country of Canada. This is what we mean when we call for a just land settlement for the Dene Nation.

from: NEW BREED Feb./76

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